THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The Apostolic Age

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INTRODUCTION

History does not run a smooth and even course. It displays periods of pre-eminent significance in which previous lines of development come to an end and new ones are opened up. Such an epoch, to which succeeding ages look up with feelings of reverence, is the age of the apostles. This age, as its very name seems to claim, was regarded as the unattainable ideal of the Christian Church, since the latter was then permitted to enjoy the absolutely authoritative guidance of the apostles, who, as world-wide missionaries, laid the foundation for all future organization and supplied an infallible standard of doctrine. Modern investigation has to a large extent robbed the period of its golden halo. But even for the critic the apostolic age, or, as we prefer to call it, primitive Christianity, remains one of the most important epochs in

the life of the Christian Church, with which only the period of the Reformation can bear comparison. It is the time when the gospel not only makes itself felt in the world in all the freshness of its originality, but also creates an organism for itself and finds outward and bodily expression in the Christian communities. But while for this purpose it avails itself of the material ready to hand, namely men, with all their long-standing and deep-rooted views and habits, it enters into manifold connexions which lead to a gradual corruption and secularization. The result is the Catholic Church.

The very point which makes the apostolic age important is that everything is still in a state of transition and growth, while the Spirit shows itself as a living force to a degree that is perhaps never equalled again. It is just this combination of enthusiasm with the upgrowth and elaboration of the forms necessary to historical development which makes primitive Christianity so interesting, but at the same time renders its delineation so extraordinarily difficult.

In addition there is the lack of sufficient sources. We have a picture of the apostolic

age which belongs to the period itself. We refer to the fifth book of the New Testament, known as the 'Acts of the Apostles,' which is really the second part of Luke's gospel, and the two together are intended to tell the story of the beginnings of Christianity for the benefit of readers who had already received some Christian instruction but were anxious to have a more detailed account. The author, writing towards the end of the first century, has certainly told the story to the best of his knowledge. But he is himself dependent on separate sources which, though good, are yet inadequate, and in the selection, arrangement, and treatment of his material he is strongly influenced by the point of view of his age. Hence cautious criticism is always necessary in making use of the picture which he gives us.

Modern investigation is agreed that the Epistles of Paul must be regarded as sources of the first rank. We have learnt in addition to make full use of the Gospels for the apostolic age, both in so far as the words of the Lord had an immediate effect in setting up an authoritative standard, and, on the other hand, in so far as

the different forms in which the Lord's sayings have been transmitted reflect experiences through which the Christian communities passed.

The sources become more abundant the further we descend the stream of time. To the later period belong, according to those critical views which are gaining more and more acceptance, the whole of the so-called Catholic Epistles, i.e. the Epistles of Peter, John, James and Jude, and also certain of the Epistles which bear the name of Paul. Here too belong the writings of the so-called apostolic Fathers, which in the early ages were included in the New Testament : the Epistles of Clement, (so-called) Barnabas, Ignatius and Polycarp, and the 'Shepherd' of Hermas. More diffuse and superficial than the Pauline Epistles, these writings nevertheless often give us deeper glimpses into the life of the communities. They are distinguished from the later literature of the Church by their naïve and untheological, we might even say, their non-literary character : it is just this which marks them as belonging to the period of primitive Christianity.

Tradition is most inadequate as regards the

earliest beginnings. They remain hidden from us, like the origin of all life. Science, if it is to be honest, must here confess its ignorance. But let there be no confusion: if we renounce any hope of a complete explanation, it does not mean that we deny the reality of the facts, any more than it implies an unreflecting acceptance of all later ideas about them.

Chapter I

CHRISTIANITY IN THE JEWISH WORLD
(The Primitive Community)

Jesus had died on the cross, condemned by the Sanhedrin as a blasphemer and by the Roman governor because he made himself a king. His disciples had fled to Galilee. Here, however, they became convinced that he was alive and in spite of everything was the Chosen One of God, the Messiah, who should come again in glory to establish his kingdom. How the disciples came to hold this conviction will always remain a mystery: the revelations of the risen Lord are realities, however little we are able to comprehend them. They prove themselves by the effects which they have produced.

The belief that the Lord was alive impelled the disciples to go at once to Jerusalem, the

city of David, where they awaited the return of the Lord. Here they associated with the local believers, who had passed through a similar experience: the Lord was alive—this was what they had to tell one another.

And this life became a matter of experience to them in a lasting spiritual intercourse with the Lord, which from time to time became so vivid as to take the form of special appearances of Christ. The manner of these appearances must again be left an open question. The materialistic features which are ascribed to them by the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are due to later elaboration. Men wished to have them thus palpable because it seemed that only in this way was it possible to make certain of their reality. To us, on the contrary, the spiritual element, which distinguishes the Pauline conception, but of which traces are seen in other accounts too, is a proof that something real was here experienced, although the age had no adequate form in which to represent it.

To the remoulding influences of a later period we must also ascribe the form of the story which has been inferred from the Acts of the Apostles,

namely, that this intercourse lasted only forty days and then came to an end in a solemn farewell scene. On the older view the Resurrection and the Ascension are absolutely coincident. The Lord now appears from heaven to his own people, just as, at some future time, or rather soon, he will descend from heaven and reveal himself to all the world.

It was not long before a Messianic community was established under the leadership of Peter and the Twelve, who in Jesus' lifetime already formed the nucleus of his band of disciples and his constant escort. This proceeding is also wrapped in obscurity. According to the Acts of the Apostles it was at Pentecost, and thus seven weeks after the death of Jesus, that *glossolalia*, 'speaking with tongues,' broke out for the first time—a phenomenon of an ecstatic character, taking the form of inarticulate speech combined with convulsive movements, which gave the bystanders the impression of frenzy, and indeed of drunkenness. Here it was looked upon as a proof of the general outpouring of the Spirit and consequently the beginning of the Messianic age, according to the prediction of the prophet Joel

(3[1-5]); hence it made a powerful impression and brought thousands into the Messianic community. A later view, which is interwoven with this in the Acts of the Apostles, sets up a parallel between this event and the proclamation of the Law on Mount Sinai, which according to the Rabbinic tradition took place in the languages of all nations. The oldest conception seems to be that of an appearance of Christ, of which we get glimpses in Paul, I Cor. 15[6], and John 20[22]. What really took place is here also hidden from us. Enough that after Pentecost there was a not inconsiderable community in Jerusalem who recognized Jesus the Crucified as the Messiah who, raised by God and carried up into heaven, should come again in glory.

We cannot understand the possibility of such a community growing up in spite of Jesus having been put to death unless we clearly realize that the Roman officials who ruled in Judæa refrained on principle from interfering with the internal religious affairs of the people so long as these possessed no political significance, and that by the very fact of taking up this attitude they forced the different factions in the nation as far

as possible to live at peace with one another. In place of the somewhat harsh treatment meted out to the Jews under Tiberius (14–37), the traditional policy of forbearance had been restored after the fall of Sejanus (31). The legate of Syria, Vitellius, was openly their friend. Only once during this period did the madness of a Caligula attempt an outrage on that which the nation held most sacred, the purity of the imageless worship carried on in the Temple. It is noteworthy and characteristic that Christian tradition has nothing to tell us about the wild excitement over this attempt of the Emperor to set up a colossal image of himself in the Temple—an attempt happily frustrated by his death. It is only in the apocalyptic pictures of the Antichrist that we seem here and there to catch echoes of it. Of course the individual synagogues had full disciplinary jurisdiction over their members, just as the Sanhedrin had over the whole nation; but there could be no question of a regular persecution of believers in Christ so long as the secular power did not lend its aid. This happened for the first time under the frivolous bigot Agrippa I (41–44), after Judæa

had been permitted by Claudius (41–54) to become again a Jewish monarchy.

Add to this that Judaism was at that time honeycombed with sects of the most varied kinds. Alongside the political party, which consisted of the ruling priestly caste and its satellites, the so-called Sadducees, there stood two organizations which resembled monastic orders: the community of the Pharisees, who, without withdrawing from the nation, sought to realize in themselves the highest ideal of piety by conformity to the Law, and the Essenes, who tried to achieve a more ascetic ideal by withdrawing from the world to the solitudes east of Jordan, although they also had monastic settlements here and there throughout the land. The separate Rabbinic schools also seem to have organized themselves within the framework of the synagogues without disturbing their constitution and government. So the disciples of Jesus might well be looked upon as such a school, or, when they continually grew in number, as such an order, and could enter the family of the existing societies and fit in with the others without exciting any great surprise. And this all the more, the less they brought out

the contrast between themselves and the rest of Israel.

This is a point of special importance. Christianity in its earliest stages is not to be looked upon as the new world-religion, fully conscious of its opposition to Judaism, which it afterwards turned out to be. The disciples at the earliest period had not yet come to understand that this was its fundamental significance. They saw in their Master the Messiah of the Jews, who would bring to a glorious fulfilment what the Law and the Prophets had proclaimed. The chief emphasis was laid on the Messianic expectations; men could appeal for confirmation to the re-awakened spirit of the prophets in their midst. But the Law was not therefore neglected. The disciples of Jesus were as faithful to the Law as any other body of Jews. For the scrupulous fulfilment of the Law seemed to be a prior condition of the coming of the Messiah, their Lord.

So we see the primitive community, and at their head the Twelve, taking part in the services of the Temple, they observe the hours of prayer and also attend the synagogues. They live the sober and upright life of the pious Jew.

In addition of course they had their own assemblies. Here they gave themselves up to the study of the sacred scriptures of their people, the Old Testament, reading it in the light of all that they had lately gone through and experienced, and at the same time gaining new light on much that still puzzled them in the life and death of their Master. They helped one another to recall his words and deeds, and then reciprocally strengthened the faith and confidence with which they surrendered themselves to him and centred their hopes on him by partaking of a common meal, at which they broke bread and passed round the cup just as he had done. The spirit of the prayers which were uttered in these assemblies we can gather from that recorded in the Acts of the Apostles 4^{24-30} (though the actual wording is naturally due to the writer). The spiritual enthusiasm may often have found vent in the form of 'speaking with tongues.' This was also the place for the appeals of the new prophets. These manifestations of enthusiasm, which at that time were very highly esteemed, as being proofs of divine inspiration and authorization, are however by

no means exclusively characteristic of primitive Christianity; they belong to those accompaniments of religion which from time to time come into prominence and at that particular period were wide-spread both in Judaism and heathenism. The special characteristics of Christianity lie elsewhere—they are seen in its faith and life.

It is difficult to gain a clear picture of the life of these earliest communities, since the Acts of the Apostles in this respect leaves us in the lurch. One thing only is clear; it was not merely what it seemed, namely, Judaism with a strong admixture of Messianic expectations. The new element introduced by Jesus showed itself in an entire and fundamental change of tone, which was perhaps not realized by the people themselves. Jesus had transformed their rigid monotheistic belief in God into a living trust in God. The former strict observance of the Law, with its Pharisaic self-complacency and coveting of rewards, and as its counterpart, anxiety and timidity, were replaced by a joyous spirit of filial relationship to God. The Law was observed, but in a spirit of freedom, in the deeper and more spiritual sense which Jesus' treatment and inter-

pretation of the Law naturally brought in its train. Everything that was living and valuable in the religion of contemporary Judaism was here given its full force, but was subordinated to the one great fundamental thought of the Kingdom of God.

Thus it was old genuine Judaism, which yet bore in itself the hidden seeds of a new development.

The new community was a brotherhood: as the members called themselves simply 'the disciples,' so also they went by the name of 'the brethren.' Love, close comradeship, held them in bonds of union. The Acts of the Apostles is certainly correct when it declares that they had all things in common (2^{44}); and that no one said of the things which he possessed that they were his own (4^{32}). Only we must beware of understanding this in the sense of a thoroughgoing communism, a mistake perhaps made by the author of the Acts himself. He knew from two examples that certain people had sold their goods for the benefit of the community, for instance, the Levite Barnabas, whose heroic sacrifice was so greatly admired that Ananias

and Sapphira also wished to win similar commendation; hence they sold their possessions but could not make up their minds to part with the whole of the sum they had received. The fraud, unmasked by Peter, met with terrible punishment in the sudden death of husband and wife, in which men believed they could clearly trace the hand of God. From these two stories the author of the Acts derived his idea that it was a universally valid rule that possessions should be sold for the benefit of the community, an idea which can be understood from the circumstances of the time and the leaning of many schools of philosophy towards communism, but which is refuted by these very two examples. There is therefore no question of Essenian influence on the earliest stage of Christianity. The primitive community loses nothing when we take from it this supposed idealistic feature, namely, its communism. Not community of goods but care for the poor is the glory of budding Christianity.

The primitive community must of course have had plenty of poor. Whether it was that the Galilean fishermen, who formed the nucleus, lost their scanty possessions through migration to

Jerusalem, whether in the enthusiasm of the earliest period men were too little concerned with the business of the earthly life, or whether the preaching of the Gospel gave special proof of its attractive power in the case of the poor—whatever the cause, the community as such was poor and at a later period it still had to claim help from foreign communities.

Nevertheless it cared for its poor. We hear of a daily ministration to widows, and the appointment of special officers to look after the poor when the unofficial form which relief had hitherto taken proved to be insufficient. The seven men who were then chosen by the community and installed by the Twelve amid prayer and the laying on of hands supply us with the first instance of office within Christianity. It is noteworthy that this was an office of deaconship and also that it was only of temporary duration: the first persecution scattered the board of officials and we do not hear that it was reconstituted.

Later on James the brother of the Lord stands at the head of the primitive community, supported by a circle of elders. Next to his vigorous

personal character the main factor in winning the respect with which he was regarded was his relationship to Jesus. As the brother of the Messiah he was marked out by birth to take his place. So he gradually put even Peter and the Twelve into the shade, though in the lifetime of the Lord he had held aloof from the circle of disciples. The other brethren of Jesus were also held in high esteem, and for a considerable time the leadership of the Palestinian communities remained in the hands of 'kinsmen of the Lord' —a truly Semitic feature foreign to the spirit of the Gospel.

We have no certain information as to the origin of the Elders who are first mentioned in Acts 11^{30} at the beginning of the fourth decade (though the whole passage is very doubtful). This institution, if it is really ancient, may well be derived from the constitution of the synagogue, or it may reach still further back to Old Testament models. (Exod. 18; Num. 11.)

The Twelve themselves, who in the beginning were the leaders, manifestly regarded the preaching of the gospel as their special task. But we must be careful not to form false ideas as to this

very ministry of the word. It is clear that, to begin with, they did not come forward at all or only in isolated instances as popular preachers: the object to be aimed at was rather to initiate into the spirit of the Gospel those who had been won by personal contact, to make them familiar with the sayings of the Lord and to help them to understand his life by means of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. This work of teaching undertaken by the Twelve was great enough, however quietly and inconspicuously it may have been carried on. To it we are indebted for the fact that the essential spirit of Christianity was not buried under the waves of the earliest outbreak of spiritual enthusiasm, which overflowed into ecstasy, and that the ideas of the Sermon on the Mount and of the parables of Jesus remained the leading ideas in the young community.

We do not know how rapid was the outward progress that was made. The Acts speaks of three thousand believers at Pentecost, and immediately afterwards five thousand (4^4); it declares that the community grew daily (2^{47}) by the addition of a multitude of men and women (5^{14}, 6^7).

The numbers however are not to be looked upon as statistically exact; they are only meant to give the impression of a wonderfully quick growth. And such we may and must assume.

Above all we must admit that there was a rapid spread over all the region where Jews were settled, including therefore not only Judæa with the sea-coast, where Peter found Christians already established both at Joppa and Lydda, but also Galilee and the land east of Jordan, as far as the Hauran and Damascus. At the time of the conversion of Paul, which is to be put perhaps eighteen months and at the latest five years after the death of Jesus, the existence of Christians in Damascus is presupposed. By means of Jews the gospel reached Mesopotamia, Edessa, and indeed Babylon, where there was an old-established Jewish settlement, with a population almost larger than that of the homeland.

But it must not be forgotten that this expansion remained confined to Jews, and that it was carried on very quietly, not by means of open and public propaganda. From house to house the messengers of the gospel travelled, often two by two, tarrying where they were given a friendly

welcome, and living on the hospitality of the house; without money, provided only with the barest necessaries, their steps winged by the thought that they must carry the glad tidings to the whole of Israel before the reign of the Lord could begin.

In doing so they certainly underwent many painful experiences; they were often inhospitably turned away and had to shake the dust from off their feet. Indeed actual sufferings were not lacking; many a zealous ruler of the synagogue put his disciplinary powers into force against these propagators of false doctrine, and they were scourged and expelled. But they did not allow themselves to be deterred by this. As an example we may take the story in the Acts of the Apostles of the imprisonment and trial of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (cf. chaps. 3 and 4, with the duplicate of this story in chap. 5). Only it is put in a false light by the author and appears as a great political action, which it certainly was not.

The main point is that we can speak of only two persecutions, short but certainly violent. The first was occasioned by the coming forward

of the Hellenists, which will be discussed presently. It broke out with the stoning of their chief spokesman, Stephen, and was carried into a wider sphere, and indeed into the remotest parts of the land, by Saul, who afterwards became the Apostle Paul. It obviously occurs at a period when the arm of the Roman power was weakened, as may have been the case after the recall of Pilate, under the rule of the legate of Syria, Vitellius, an inveterate partisan of the Jews.

The second was originated by the Jewish king, Agrippa I, and was aimed at the leaders of the Twelve, James (the son of Zebedee) and Peter. The former was beheaded probably at the Passover of 44; the latter had a miraculous escape and fled from Jerusalem.

The Christians of Palestine may subsequently have suffered much oppression. But we hear nothing more of definite persecutions and martyrdoms until the death of James, the brother of the Lord (probably in the year 62), which we shall deal with later on.

But the very fact of persecution was bound to help in spreading the gospel: it now penetrated into parts of Palestine and the neighbouring

region of Syria which had hitherto been avoided. Philip, one of the seven, worked successfully in Samaria, the religion of which was an imitation of Judaism, and on this account more hated and despised by the real Jews than heathenism itself. The Acts of the Apostles, chap. 8, immediately adds a second story of Philip; relating the conversion of a proselyte of high rank, a eunuch who was chamberlain to Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and who had come up to the feast at Jerusalem from distant Abyssinia. Other Hellenists went as far as the capital of Syria, Antioch, one of the greatest cities in the Empire, with a strong colony of Jews, and here they took the great step of approaching the Gentiles directly with the preaching of the gospel.

To understand this we must realize clearly how the case stood with these Hellenists. Although Jews, they had long dwelt far from their homeland amid the Greek Dispersion, and so had not only acquired the Greek language and many Greek customs, but were also influenced to a certain extent by the Greek spirit. The Judaism of the Dispersion tended in many respects towards laxity and latitudinarianism. If there

was already a tendency in the homeland for the synagogue to take the place of the Temple and the rabbi of the priest, this was still more strongly marked abroad, where the synagogue was involuntarily assimilated to the philosophical schools, and instead of a strictly literal interpretation of the Law, a philosophical interpretation in the spirit of the Stoa was cultivated under the cloak of Mosaic wisdom. People trained in this way brought to the gospel quite different standards from those of the Galilean fishermen on whom the heritage of Jesus had first of all devolved: they recognized more or less clearly that here they were dealing with something new, which strove to transcend the limits of the old, and that Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God not only reduced the value of the Temple worship but also rendered the whole of the Law superfluous. A few particularly advanced spirits, such as Stephen, uttered thoughts such as these even in Jerusalem: the natural consequence was the persecution which began with the stoning of Stephen, of which we have already spoken.

It was not only in the case of Jews who held fast to the old ways, and especially among the

scribes of Pharisaic tendencies, such as Saul, that the coming forward of the Hellenists loosed a storm of indignation. It also called forth a violent reaction in the circle of believers in the Messiah. Under the leadership of the immediate disciples of the Lord these had hitherto followed the practice of Jesus himself in simply accepting the Law as an authoritative guide for their lives without thinking much about it; they remained just what they were, Jews, pious Jews, faithful to the Law. The deepening influence which the person and words of Jesus had naturally exercised upon them they did not regard as leading to any opposition. But now that the question of the permanent validity of the Law was raised as a matter of principle by the Hellenists, a feeling naturally arose in many cases that here something essential was at stake. Those especially who had not come immediately under the influence of Jesus, who had not felt the inspiration of his absolute surrender to the will of God, his Father, looked upon freedom from the Law as licence, sin, relapse into heathenism. Hence they could not reconcile themselves to the proposal that the gospel should be offered to the heathen

before they were received into Judaism. The leadership of this circle, which declared that to hold fast to the Law was essential and necessary to salvation, fell to James, the brother of the Lord, who in this matter was as far removed from the spirit of Jesus as he was near him by ties of family. On the other side stood Peter and with him certainly the larger part of the original members of the community of disciples; they remained personally what they were, pious Jews, faithful to the Law. But still they were able to understand the demand of the Hellenists, and rejoiced wherever they found a living faith in Christ, even among Samaritans and Gentiles, although it might not be accompanied by any strict observance of the Law. Indeed as occasion offered, they took the liberty of granting themselves dispensation from the narrow limits of the Law. The Acts of the Apostles is aware that Peter and John also took part in Philip's mission to the Samaritans (this no doubt is the historical kernel of the narrative of an inspection by order of the primitive community, which has certainly been coloured by later additions), and that Peter, after at first resisting, was induced

by the vision of the clean and unclean animals let down in a sheet (Acts c. 10), to preach in a Gentile house and even to eat with these Gentiles. The story of the conversion of the centurion Cornelius is certainly historical, although on the other hand the author puts it in a wrong place—namely too early.

In this difference of view we see revealed the motives which led to a further development. The Hellenists were driven by the very consequence of their position to go beyond the narrow limits of the national Jewish Christianity: and thereby they laid the foundation for the great church of the Gentiles. The future belonged to them. The other two parties remained within Jewish Christianity as rivals, even when the complete breaking away from the synagogue became for them also an historical necessity. But the failure to understand the true significance of the gospel, the half-heartedness from which both parties suffered, was avenged by their failure to grow: later on they represent merely archaic survivals, partly looked upon with diffident respect, partly treated as disloyal heretics.

Chapter II

CHRISTIANITY IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

(The Pauline Communities)

Christianity was more than a merely revived and completed Judaism. It was something new and world-embracing. Even if Jesus himself gave no direct command to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, his spirit drove men necessarily to attempt the task. As soon as it was recognized that the worship and Law of Israel, with all their merits, were yet not the final form of religion, the preaching of the kingdom of God was bound to be carried to the Gentile world as well. The conversion of the Gentiles already played a part, though often a subordinate part, in the Messianic expectations of Israel. The proselytism carried on by Judaism, especially in the freer, wider form of the Dispersion, without circumcision,

had effectually prepared the way. Everywhere the synagogues were surrounded by Gentile inquirers, who felt themselves attracted by the Jewish monotheism, with its pure spiritual form of worship and lofty morality; some of these inquirers were also allured, it may be, by the peculiarities of Jewish customs and the many political privileges which this religious community enjoyed. If Christianity once crossed the borders of Palestine it could not possibly remain confined to the Jewish world.

The imperial situation was as favourable as possible to the spread of a new religion. There was peace throughout the world, the pirates had been put down and the civil wars ended. United under a strong rule and protected on its frontiers, the length and breadth of the empire enjoyed a period when trade and art and science flourished in peace. Navigation was safe, the roads good, the Roman administration of justice on the whole impartial and conscientious. The caprice of provincial officials was held in check by the central imperial authority. The provinces felt themselves bound together by their common loyalty to the emperor (σεβαστός) at Rome. A

cosmopolitan tone had taken the place of the old spirit which could not look beyond its town or village. Greek culture was everywhere in the ascendant. Greek was the language of everyday life, even in Rome. Communication between men of all nations was facilitated to an extent which has scarcely been equalled in any other period.

And a great religious longing swept over the length and breadth of the empire. The scepticism of the age of enlightenment had become bankrupt. Everywhere the old cults showed signs of new life, and their number was increased especially by foreign importations from the east. The Egyptian Isis and the great Phrygian Mother of the Gods were as much at home in Rome as in the great Greek cities. The lately introduced worship of the emperor was more of a political nature; it supplied pomp and splendour without satisfying real religious needs. The latter found all the more food in the various mysteries, which were partly old ones revived and partly new creations. The Persian cult of Mithra, in a Hellenized form, made a triumphal progress through all the provinces of the empire shortly after the rise of Christianity. The old Egyptian

wisdom, handed down by the priests as a revelation of Hermes Trismegistus, was also refashioned on Greek lines and its mysticism, in part profound, in part grossly superstitious, gathered new bodies of adherents.

When religious needs were so many there was naturally no lack of pious fraud; quack priests of all kinds, magicians and sorcerers, went to and fro throughout the empire taking advantage of the superstitious populace. Peripatetic orators declaimed on all sorts of religious subjects. In this respect, too, there was a great deal of life and movement. But in the end nothing brought satisfaction. Men longed for redemption, deliverance from the bonds of inexorable Nature, from the misery of this world; they hungered for certainty in regard to a future life. All this was what they sought in all the secret rites, but in vain.

Then came the gospel. It brought the glad tidings of the grace of God and forgiveness of sins, of happy filial relationship to God and new moral power, of resurrection and eternal life. It turned with this message to all in whom a need of redemption made itself felt, particularly the

poor, the despised, and above all the degraded. No wonder that outwardly it gave the impression that here was only a new form of oriental superstition, of which there were so many, and indeed one of the worst; no wonder, too, that it needed a long time before the peculiar character of the religion of Jesus, the decisive novelty of the spirit which was alive in these communities, revealed itself to those who stood outside. Let us not forget too that the gospel did not work along exclusively religious lines: alongside the specific task of missionary activity, the preaching of the word, we often see a ministry of healing grow up, in continuation of the practice already pursued by Jesus. This was regarded as a miraculous interposition of divine power to prove the gospel, and was instrumental in gaining it many adherents. And from the beginning the communities attracted a multitude of the needy and suffering, owing to the strong spirit of fraternity and mutual aid which pervaded them. However much we emphasize the religious as the central impulse in the new movement, we must not overlook these subsidiary factors, which were often very powerful.

Missionary activity started from Antioch, the capital of Syria. As we saw, Hellenists were the first missionaries, nameless men, who yet accomplished one of the greatest deeds in the history of the world. Only a few individuals stand out clearly, the Levite Barnabas from Cyprus, whom we have already seen playing a part in the primitive community; and above all Saul from Tarsus, who under his Latin name of Paul is known to us as the greatest of the Apostles—the missionary to the Gentiles. His commanding importance at an early period eclipsed all other workers in the field. But we must never forget that he was always surrounded by a large circle of companions and helpers, such as Silas, Timothy, Titus, Tychicus, etc., and that many others worked independently alongside him. Thus Christianity was brought to Rome direct from Palestine, probably as early as the time of Claudius, by means of unknown agents: many think particularly of the names of Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16^{17}). Here in the capital of the world people of the most varied types worked side by side, as Paul himself bears witness (Phil. 1^{14}). All sorts of Christian circles

may have been formed—partly in connexion with the various synagogues, partly unconnected with them—which did not unite into a community until a later period. But even within his own domain Paul found rivals, for example, the Alexandrian Jew Apollos, who worked with Paul temporarily, but carried on a peculiar form of preaching different from his. For although Paul himself was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, which was celebrated as a centre of Hellenism, yet in accordance with the national Pharisaic traditions of his family and the Rabbinic education which he had enjoyed in Jerusalem he was no Hellenist, but a Jew of genuine Palestinian stamp. His decisive importance is owing to the very fact that the Judaism which he abandoned was not the lax form represented by the liberal-minded teachers of Alexandria, who had a Greek education, but the strictest form of Pharisaic conformity to the Law. Hence he came to make that sharp break which showed that the new teaching really was something new.

We cannot here enter into the extremely interesting question of Paul's personality and his development, first into the most violent

opponent and persecutor of Christianity, and then, in consequence of the vision of Christ before Damascus, into its most zealous champion and propagator : this is reserved for a separate volume in the series.[1] Here we can only deal briefly with his missionary activity, and even this only in its general features, as a specimen of the way in which missionary work was carried on among the Gentiles.

As distinguished from the mission to the Jews, whose agents are the communities themselves, and whose objective is the whole Jewish realm, village by village, we have here to do with an activity which is carried on by various professional missionaries in accordance with fixed principles and plans, and which presses forward with all its powers. Possibly the activity of Barnabas in his Cyprian home partook more of the nature of the home mission in Palestine : Paul, however, always passes rapidly from one great centre of politics and culture to another. He prefers to select towns which, as Roman colonies and the

[1] *Paul*, by W. Wrede ; trans. by E. W. Lummis, London : Philip Green, 1907. This is a most stimulating work, but it does not do justice to the great apostle of Jesus Christ, who throughout his life was a true interpreter of his Master.

seat of Roman officials, afford him, as a Roman citizen, the special protection of the law, and in which he could also be certain of finding a synagogue established under the wings of the Roman eagle. Thus his chief stations in Syria and Cilicia are the military colonies in Pisidia and Lycaonia, the Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra. Subsequently, in his great mission to Asia Minor and Europe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus become his chief stations—cities which, as great seaports and commercial centres, had a motley population from all nations and afforded shelter to the most varied cults. In these great cities Paul secured a fixed base for his operations, and by means of his pupils the mission then spread quite naturally in the neighbouring districts. Thus the gospel was carried to the cities of the valley of the Lycus, Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, by means of the Phrygian Epaphras (Epaphroditus), whom Paul had probably come across in Ephesus.

Paul did not travel as a missionary but as an artisan—a tent-maker. And his first associates were naturally those with whom his trade brought him into contact. Thus in Corinth, in

the house of Jewish fellow-craftsmen, he found not only work and lodging but also, before long, a ready hearing for his gospel. Aquila and his wife Priscilla became his most zealous fellow-workers in the mission. The next chance of getting into touch with people was offered by the synagogue. For Paul was himself a Jew, and it was from Judaism that the gospel of Jesus the Christ came: to the Jews it was above all addressed; in their case the conditions were the most favourable for understanding it aright. This connexion with the synagogue is so natural that it never ought to have been called in question, although the use which the Acts of the Apostles makes of it rouses a strong suspicion that it has been fitted into an artificial scheme. We hear only once of an attempt made by the apostle to appeal directly to the Gentiles without the intervention of Judaism and the Old Testament and to impart the gospel to the educated Greeks in the form of a philosophical exposition in their own style. This was at Athens, where the ancient spirit of Hellenism, its pride of culture, its artistic sense, still persisted in their purest form, and where men held aloof

from everything barbarian, above all everything oriental. Here Paul spoke on monotheism and eternal life as a philosopher to philosophers. But his gospel was not sufficiently abstract to make any impression on these people; it exhibited far too many concrete features and betrayed its historical origin—Jesus and his resurrection. The attempt ended in an overwhelming failure. Christianity, on account of the whole of its previous history and its origin, could not at first dispense with the synagogue as a starting-point.

But this was only a starting-point. In the synagogue Paul came into touch with the numerous proselytes who had attached themselves more or less closely to the Jewish community. A minority of them had really become members by means of circumcision, but even these, however much interest was taken in themselves and in their money, counted only as Jews of the second rank. The preaching of the gospel, especially in its Pauline form, now offered these people everything which had made the synagogue of value to them, but at the same time a great deal more, because it put what was specifically

Jewish in the background. The Law with its ceremonies and the peculiarities of Jewish customs, which were the object of much ridicule, was to remain in force no longer: in its stead the seeking heart and troubled conscience were offered not only the divine 'Thou shalt' but the comfortable gospel of the grace of God in Christ, and undreamt-of joy and blessedness in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of peace with God. Even though much that Paul, the former Rabbi, had to expound—his proofs from the Old Testament, his clothing of the thoughts of the gospel in the formulas of the Rabbinic schools—might remain incomprehensible to many of these hearers (the Alexandrian method of Apollos, which was pervaded to a greater extent by the Greek spirit, was more attractive to them), yet what he really had to impart appealed to their consciences and proved itself a power over their hearts.

But when the boundaries of Judaism proper were once crossed and connexions formed with families who were originally Gentiles, it was not long before access was gained to circles which had not yet come into touch with the synagogue.

The idea which has lately become widespread, that the mission was confined to Jews and converts to Judaism, is untenable in face of the plain testimony of the Epistles to the Corinthians, which show in particular the close connexion between Christianity and the Gentile world.

By this step the future of Christianity was decided: a society whose fundamental confession of faith was rejected as blasphemy by the majority of the Jewish members of the synagogues, a society in which proselytes played the leading part, and which invited even Gentiles into its fellowship without any discrimination—such a society could find no place to develop within the framework of the synagogue; it was bound to secede and to constitute itself independently.

This withdrawal involved, to be sure, the renunciation of all the privileges which the synagogue enjoyed, and it was not even certain whether the circumcised Jewish members were exempt from the jurisdiction of the synagogue and the many annoyances which it involved. Paul does not seem to be excommunicated once for all and everywhere: in every fresh place he attaches himself first of all to the synagogue,

and in Jerusalem he goes to the Temple without hindrance. But he is continually scourged by order of the synagogues and persecuted with fierce hatred as an apostate. We observe that it is always the Jews who put obstacles in the way of the Pauline mission and incite the Gentile populace to violent attacks on the apostle and his companions. Jewish machinations drive Paul from Antioch in Pisidia to Iconium, thence to Lystra, and thence, after he had been stoned before the gate of the city and left for dead, on to Derbe. Jewish intrigues compel him to abandon his work in Thessalonica prematurely and also to hurry on from Beroea to Athens. Only rarely is it the Gentile world itself which opposes the apostle, and then because it finds that its business interests are being injured by the success of the Christian preaching. Thus Paul is accused before the magistrates at Philippi by the masters of the maid possessed with a spirit of divination, which Paul had cast out of her—her masters thought rather that he had robbed them of the source of their gain. In Ephesus the silversmiths under the leadership of a certain Demetrius bring about an attack on Paul because

his activity injured their trade—the making of souvenirs of the temple of Diana. A splendid testimony, surely, to the success of his preaching! In contrast to this Jewish and Gentile opposition arising from rivalry and commercial jealousy, Paul everywhere finds protection (as the Acts of the Apostles is very careful to emphasize) at the hands of the Roman authorities, partly because of his Roman citizenship. In Philippi it is true that he was at first scourged, but on the following day he is set at liberty by the magistrates with humble apologies. The proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, a brother of the famous philosopher and minister Seneca, dismisses without examination an accusation of the Jews against Paul, as being a mere Jewish quarrel. In Ephesus the highest circles exert themselves to protect Paul from the rage of the misguided populace.

In general the Acts of the Apostles is fond of emphasizing the relations of the Christian missionaries to those in high position, for example, the proconsul Sergius Paulus in Cyprus, the procurators of Judæa, Felix and Festus, the Jewish King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice. We have no ground for completely denying these relations,

although it is to be remembered that Christianity for a long time remained a religion of the poor, the humble, the uneducated. The footing which Christianity gained at an early period even in the imperial palace does not extend beyond the servants' quarters, and the guard-rooms, certainly not beyond the pages' department, while Judaism could boast of direct patronage on the part of the ladies of the court. No less one-sided, indeed, is the conception which finds representatives among the old enemies of Christianity as well as among its latest champions, that it was purely a religion of the proletariat. Although at first only a few of the higher classes were to be found in the communities, they, no less than the slaves, supplemented the members of the middle class who certainly formed the main body. The Christian communities no doubt did not differ much in this respect from the synagogues.

The separation from Judaism was probably a difficult matter to many a former member and friend of the synagogue, and may have seemed a doubtful step into the unknown. The disadvantages, however, were far outweighed by the independence thus gained. For it was this

that first made it possible for the new spirit to develop its own individuality to the full extent, and thus create not a Jewish sect but a new world-religion.

But however highly we estimate the significance of the communities becoming independently constituted, we must not exaggerate it from the formal point of view. There can be no question of any fixed organization, the enactment of statutes, the choice of an executive, the creation of common funds, and so on. It is true that all this is found in the highly developed Greek club life of the time, which served many ends, especially the cultivation of gymnastics, the promotion of the arts and of social intercourse, but yet at the same time was not lacking in religious inspiration: and it is found no less in the Jewish synagogues, which outwardly were not so very different from the Greek clubs. But the young Christian communities had at first nothing of this kind, because for the moment the spiritual enthusiasm transcended all forms and the expectation of the near return of the Lord left no room for any thought of the future. It was enough if they had a place for their meet-

ings, which in the beginning were probably very frequent. The meeting-place was in the house of one of the wealthier members, in Corinth, for example, in the house of the proselyte Titus Justus, hard by the synagogue. Elsewhere probably a room was hired: thus at Ephesus Paul taught in the school of a philosopher—Tyrannus. It was the missionary himself who formed the spiritual rallying-point; to him the leadership naturally fell, without which indeed the holding together of a circle of any size is absolutely unthinkable. It was not until after his departure that it usually became evident how essential was such an outstanding and universally recognized authority for the maintenance of order. When the Acts of the Apostles makes Paul and Barnabas everywhere appoint elders in the newly founded communities, it only does the same as we find in all the latter apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which declare that the whole clerical hierarchy of their period was ordained by the apostle in question: it puts back the arrangement of a later period to the days of the apostles with the unconscious feeling that something of the kind ought to have been done towards the formal

organization of the communities. But it was not done. The Spirit was still mighty and refused to be bound to any forms.

As the missionary himself, under the title of apostle, was regarded as a special vehicle of the Spirit, so men saw in the utterances of the prophets and teachers who sprang up around him not the speech of men but the inspired word of God. In addition there were *charismatics* of all kinds, i.e. those endowed with gifts of the Spirit, who uttered in a state of ecstasy wonderful incomprehensible sounds, and others who could interpret these sounds and give them some deep and edifying meaning. There were others again whose inspiration brought about wonderful cures by psychical influence and gave other extraordinary proofs of power. But even where natural aptitudes were heightened by enthusiasm, where a special talent for leadership showed itself, or a pre-eminent capacity for looking after the poor and the sick, men still spoke of these qualities as *charismata*, gifts of the Spirit. In fact Paul, basing his argument on the Messianic prophecy of the universal outpouring of the Spirit, can work out the idea that strictly speak-

ing every Christian possesses some sort of *charisma*. Spiritual gifts, however, make their possessors respected, and the pre-eminent vehicles of the Spirit, such as apostles, prophets and teachers, possessed a corresponding authority. Besides the sayings of the Lord, which were recognized as absolutely authoritative, the expression of the apostle's opinion or the pronouncement of a prophet were regarded as decisive. The dangers of such a constitution, based purely on spiritual enthusiasm, in which every impulse of the will could clothe itself with divine authority, in which no limits were set to individualism, in which the historical connexion was called in question at every moment, were bound to show themselves only too soon. In his Epistles to the Corinthians Paul has to deal with abuses of the grossest kind, which were essentially due to this want of a suitable, universally recognized, superior authority in the community itself. Irregularities at divine service, simultaneous and confused utterances of prophets and those speaking with tongues, gross violations of brotherliness at the common meals, want of solidarity in ordinary life, entire lack of moral discipline,

party dissensions, obtrusion of over-excited women, delay in the matter of collections, etc., can all be understood as consequences of defective organization and authority. The lower impulses in man, the old heathen habits, were given too much latitude. The Spirit was not powerful enough to hold them entirely in check.

Besides those specially inspired by the Spirit there were other people of importance. As the missionary himself not only possessed, in his character of apostle, an authority based on spiritual inspiration, but also, as the founder of the community, stood to it in an historically grounded authoritative relationship of a moral kind, to a certain extent like that of a father, so it was natural that the oldest members of the community, the first-fruits, as they were called, should have an importance which was of quite a different kind from that of the prophets. Especially if these people took an active part in discharging the various tasks of the community, if they voluntarily undertook services on behalf of the community, such as the care of strangers, journeys to other communities, deputations to the Apostle, and if in doing so they expended

both personal service and money, they were bound not only to earn the gratitude of the community but also to gain an influence in its leadership and organization. Here and there we observe a rivalry between these two anthorities, the spiritual and the constitutional, if we may apply this latter term to that of the first-fruits. In Corinth the former was obviously in the ascendant. Paul had to strengthen that of Stephanas, the first-fruits of Achaia, as he also had to interfere on behalf of his own fatherly authority in regard to the community.

From these first-fruits we get in the course of time the elders on the one hand, i.e. the order of presbyters, which we shall discuss later on. On the other hand, just as there were officials to carry out municipal administration, so, too, special officers of the community, *episcopoi* (bishops) and *diakonoi* (deacons), in English overseers and servants, were appointed to render services which in the beginning were voluntary, the care of the poor, the sick and strangers, and other duties devolving on the community as such. We find these mentioned for the first time in Philippi in the beginning of the sixth

decade. Philippi was one of the best organized Pauline communities, obviously inspired with the spirit of Roman discipline. The Epistle in which they are mentioned contains the acknowledgment of a gift of money sent by the community to the apostle.

Yet this is the result of a lengthy process of development. In the beginning everything was still in a state of flux. The Spirit ruled in unrestricted freedom.

The same applies also to the worship of these communities. We know little enough about it. It is certain that the members assembled for worship. How often? Presumably in the beginning very frequently, perhaps daily. Whether from I Cor. 16[2] 'On the first day of the week' a regular Sunday festival can be inferred, must be left undecided. One thing is clear, it was a worship of God in the spirit: everything was absent which had hitherto been regarded as essential constituents of worship—sacrifice, offerings of wine and flowers, etc. The determining element was the word—the word of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, prayer, and intercession, the word of edification, admonition, consolation,

teaching. Although the enthusiasm might often degenerate into meaningless *glossolalia*—Paul did what he could to check this—on the whole it was a reasonable service, which was bound immediately to bear moral fruits.

At first complete freedom of speech was the rule. Whoever was moved by the Spirit stood up and prophesied or prayed, taught or sang a psalm, women as well as men. Irregularities were not wanting, men interrupted one another, those speaking with tongues supplanted the prophets, emancipated women pushed themselves forward. This called for a remedy. But Paul probably did not appoint a presiding officer to act as chairman, nor did he even restrict liturgical functions to a small circle of clerics; he desires the removal of all irregularities to be accomplished by the self-discipline of the community, by the self-control of those who are inspired by the Spirit. If a revelation is granted to another the first speaker is to sit down (as a sign that he has finished). This is as far as he goes; all have liberty to speak, but it must be one after another! Things must have been lively in these assemblies, and assuredly a great deal of crudity found its

way in under the cloak of the working of the Spirit. But in the end here too the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament, which was also read everywhere in the Christian communities formed of Gentile converts, and the sayings of the Lord, handed down by tradition, became a guarantee for the maintenance of an historical connexion, and for adherence to the fundamental moral principles of the new religion. An additional guarantee was afforded by the personality of the missionaries who, when absent, intervened in the affairs of the community by means of their Epistles. The Epistles of Paul naturally came to be read aloud at these assemblies, and certainly not merely once, immediately after their receipt, but again and again.

Besides assembling for common edification the communities also met for common meals, whether immediately after the service of prayer and praise which we have described, or, as is more probable, at special hours in the evening, must be left undecided. In any case at these Lord's suppers it was not a question of purely liturgical acts, after the manner of our present-day communion services, with symbolical eating and

drinking. They were real meals, which at times even degenerated into feasting and carousing. They were meant to be consecrated by the thought of the Lord, the memory of his last meal before his death, the expectation of the future Messianic meal in the state of bliss and perfection : they were meant to be celebrated in a spirit of really Christian brotherly love, harmony and sympathy. They were probably not paid for out of common funds or prepared at the cost of one of the members, as was usually the case in the Greek clubs, but everyone contributed his share. Then the contributions were to be distributed in equal portions to all present, probably —as was done later—in such a way that a sufficient amount was saved for the absent, the sick, the weak, those in prison, etc. But it sometimes happened, as we see in Corinth, that the rich, disregarding all brotherly feelings, ate up their own ample contributions before each distribution, while the poorer brother starved, or even that, without any respect for the Lord, his supper was profaned by gluttony and drunkenness. A decided and energetic leadership was lacking, as also the necessary moral

stability. Old habits derived from heathen life still made their influence felt. The thought of Christ was not yet strong enough. Here, too, Paul looks for the remedy not in some regulation of worship, perhaps in the separation of the meal from the celebration of the Lord's supper—his advice to eat a full meal at home at most prepares the way for such a regulation—but he seeks to strengthen the thought of Christ, to awaken the consciousness of the meaning of the Lord's supper.

If the assemblies for prayer and praise possessed at the same time a missionary significance because they were open to all, both Jews and Gentiles, these Lord's suppers, on the other hand, were festivals of a brotherhood, closed against all who did not belong to the community. Admission to them was gained by baptism in the name of Jesus, i.e. immersion in flowing water accompanied by the pronouncement of the name of Jesus. This act, which presupposed faith in Jesus as the Saviour and made known the resolve to belong to him and his community, had much more than a merely symbolical meaning: men were convinced that it

was accompanied by the establishment of union with the Lord, and that all sin was cancelled and a new life implanted. The bestowal of the Holy Ghost was generally thought to be bound up with the laying on of hands, which usually followed immediately after baptism.

It is of course possible that many Christians connected all sorts of magical ideas with these acts, that they were placed on a level with the secret ceremonies of initiation and the sacred meals of heathen mysteries, that baptism was credited with an influence even over the dead (I Cor. 15^{29}), and that men looked not so much for forgiveness as for the cancelling of sins—for bodily as well as spiritual effects, without taking faith into consideration as the subjective condition that was necessary before anything could be received. On the whole this has often been exaggerated recently. Against the invasion of this heathen mode of thought, which took everything in a physical or material sense, a strong bulwark was to be found not only in men like Paul, with his purely spiritual and ethical religion, a monotheism rooted in the prophetic religion of the Old Covenant, but also in the

enthusiasm still so vigorous in the communities, which itself prevented the emergence of ideas implying sober and intellectualistic reflection, devoid of faith. It was not until this confidence of faith in itself began to lose its original power towards the end of the century that we see really heathen and magical ideas forcing their way in from all sides.

It is indeed only natural that the new converts won from heathenism with its superstitions, which were horrible in some respects, and its immorality, which was often heightened to open perversity, did not immediately lay aside all their old ideas and habits. In many places, but especially in Corinth, we see the old heathenism making its way into the Christian community. Hence the object to be aimed at by the missionaries was to work out the main lines of a Christian code of conduct by a process of education. This required great prudence if they wished to avoid the dangers of heathen laxity on the one hand and Jewish strictness on the other.

The simplest course apparently would have been to take over the primitive community's moral code, which was rooted in Judaism. There

the Gospel had in this respect to create nothing fundamentally new; it found a national moral code already existing, coloured through and through by religion, and indelibly stamped on the people by centuries of discipline under the Law, which it only had to permeate with the spirit of true piety, inwardness, and self-surrendering love. The case was quite different in the heathen world, where the code of conduct often tended directly to promote immorality, where the fundamental conceptions of chastity, honesty, and brotherliness were often totally absent. The picture which Paul gives of heathenism in Rom. 1^{18-32}, I Cor. 6^{9} f., Gal. 5^{19} f., and elsewhere he does not get from books but from what he had seen with his own eyes, especially of the conditions prevailing in Corinth. It may be that many of the Christian missionaries who came from Judaism gave the communities founded by them not only the Gospel but in addition the Jewish code of morality without further modification, as the necessary bulwark against the temptations of the old heathen mode of life. For in the Jewish code one of the most important principles was abhor-

rence of everything which had anything to do with idolatry. Even Paul is, unconsciously, often determined in his judgment by the Jewish way of looking at things, to which he had been accustomed from his youth up. This is the case when he lays great emphasis in Corinth on the veiling of women whenever they appear in public. In fact it seems that in the manner of his teaching he kept to the formal dialectic by which Jewish rabbis instructed their proselytes. Even for the 'domestic code'—the enumeration of the duties of every class—it has lately been rendered probable that he is relying on definite Jewish models. Nevertheless he turns away as a matter of principle—and in this he shows his greatness—from the imposition of an alien code on his communities. In general he will not introduce morality from the outside: a really Christian code is to grow up out of the communities: the Spirit of the Lord, which lives and works in the communities, is to create new forms for its own life. 'Know ye not?' 'Judge ye yourselves!' he exclaims to his communities time after time. In Corinth the question cropped up as to what ought to be the Christian attitude towards the eating of flesh

that came from a heathen sacrifice ; for the whole of the beast was not burnt but the larger part served for the sacrificial feast or was even sold in the market. The correct Jewish view was bound to forbid any such consumption : even if it was unconscious it meant an objective defilement and demanded lustration, expiation. Therefore in the so-called 'Apostles' Decree' (Acts 15^{23-29}), which emanated from Jerusalem, abstinence from flesh sacrificed to idols is demanded unconditionally from all Christians, even those of Gentile origin. Paul decides quite differently, or rather tries to lead the community itself to a decision. Unconscious consumption carries no penalty, it is merely a question of conscience, not only my own, to be sure, but also my brother's, whom I have to take into consideration, for love is the supreme principle of all Christian morality and conduct.

Thus Paul, at least, educated his communities to be independent by seeking to form their own moral judgment in accordance with the fundamental principles of the gospel. This certainly involved many difficulties. The Corinthians, for example, from time to time make a very bad

use of this independence. They turn it against the authority of the apostle himself and at first oppose an absolutely necessary demand—the exclusion of a member of the community living in incest with his stepmother—merely in order to preserve their freedom. Nevertheless Paul was successful, and more quickly than might have been supposed. The idea which has lately come to be widely held, that we must assume a very gradual process of transformation, a slow outgrowing of heathenism on the part of the communities, is simply an unjustified prepossession. No, with these first conversions it was mostly a case of a total break with the past. The old was put away all at once and thus the new had room to develop. The Christians of this first period live in the conviction that they have undergone a change. 'Old things are passed away, all things are become new.'

Certainly we must not press such sayings. Man remains man. No one can break so completely with his own past. But we should look for the effects of enthusiasm and the earliest inspiration, with its joyous faith, not only in ecstasy, *glossolalia* and similar phenomena; they

showed themselves just as much in the moral sphere, where unusual and extraordinary results were accomplished. Just as it would be false to picture the oldest communities as societies of nothing but saints, so it is certain that even the most depraved, when, attracted by the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins, they were drawn into Christian circles, underwent a deep inner transformation.

Another danger to which budding Christianity was exposed lay in the impulse towards asceticism which was at that time exercising a strong influence upon the world. In opposition to the sensuality which showed itself, naked and unashamed, in the Greek life of the period, an effort towards emancipation from the senses made itself felt under Oriental influences. Men abstained from intoxicating drink, even from the eating of meat, and turned away in disgust from all sexual intercourse, even in marriage. There was a great danger that early Christian enthusiasm should fail to realize the genuine evangelical conception of life and should strive to give practical proof of its moral earnestness by such abstinence or by the performance of

extraordinary feats in the sphere of asceticism. This would have been just as contrary to the Gospel as moral frivolity. Although Paul himself was not quite free from such ascetic leanings, he shows his greatness by always maintaining the fundamental principle of the Gospel 'as God hath called each, so let him walk' (I Cor. 7^{17}), and, for the rest, Paul will have him act in accordance with the principle of love. In Corinth one part of the community was troubled by apprehensions as to whether marriage was allowable: Paul, who was himself not only unmarried for the sake of his calling but inclined in general towards celibacy, yet desires not only the maintenance of the existing marriages, but declares himself unconditionally in favour of allowing fresh marriages to be contracted. In Rome there was a party which was inclined towards vegetarianism. Paul does not say that they are right; he treats them as the 'weak,' but he desires of the 'strong' that they should show them all brotherly consideration. In the Phrygian communities of Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis old tendencies towards mysticism and dualism had revived and taken on a strong

ascetic colouring through false interpretation of the Old Testament: the old elemental deities in the shape of angels demanded their rights again and the Christians believed that they could render service well-pleasing to them only by complete emancipation from the senses. Paul vigorously rejects the over-estimation of all these angelic powers, to Christ alone belongs the honour of mediator between God and the world—between God and sinful humanity. This carries with it the condemnation of all false spirituality, the self-constituted service of God by means of asceticism, the mortification of the flesh, which in the end only served to stimulate the senses. Not extraordinary ascetic performances but proof of faithfulness in the ordinary relations of life, this is for Paul the task laid upon the Christian by the Gospel of Jesus.

So, in spite of great difficulties and manifold obstacles, a definite and positively Christian morality and code of conduct slowly prevailed in the communities of Gentile converts. Above all, a monogamous ideal of marriage was upheld. Not only the woman but also the man should recognize that he was bound. All sexual inter-

course outside marriage was regarded as sin, whereas Greek heathenism had here not only acted upon the laxest principles but also justified them philosophically. For even unnatural vices were quite customary, so that no one thought anything of them. All this is absolutely forbidden to the Christian communities. It is true that the Corinthians in particular raise difficulties at first; they hold fast to the old Greek idea, *naturalia non sunt turpia*; they think they cannot allow their freedom to be restricted. But Paul is inexorable in insisting that a divine community cannot be holy without complete purity and chastity. The ancient depreciation of marriage still makes its influence felt when wedlock is treated in the first place merely as a divinely ordained means for self-protection and for the procreation of children. But Paul also speaks very emphatically of the mutual esteem and love of husband and wife, and the task of the Christian education of the children. Certainly, he insists on the subordination of the woman to the man, and even sharply opposes all the desires of the Corinthian women for emancipation: he not only requires them to appear veiled at the

assemblies for divine service, but he also tries to suppress entirely their coming forward as prophetesses. Nevertheless he is careful to emphasize the complete equality of man and woman before God. It is just in his stricter code that a higher estimate of woman finds expression. Not equality in outward things, but equality of value as regards religion, is his point of view.

There has lately been an attempt to infer from I Cor. 7^{36-37} that so-called spiritual marriages, i.e. the living together of ascetics and consecrated virgins, such as we meet with in the later Church, also occurred in the early Christian period. It seems to me that the older interpretation is more correct, which sees here a reference to the right and duty of a father to look after the marriage of his daughters.

To the Christian household there belong first of all the children, and it is laid upon the parents as a duty to educate them carefully and lovingly, while on the other hand it is impressed upon the children that they are to honour and obey their parents for Christ's sake.

Beside the children stand the slaves—a particularly difficult problem for the young Christian

communities. According to law and legal theory they were personally without rights and entirely subject to the caprice of their masters, who could employ them as they liked, even for base purposes, could sell them at any moment, punish them at will, and interfere in their family affairs. But in consequence of the theories of the newer popular philosophy concerning the universal rights of men, even of slaves, they had in practice gained a much more favourable position. Custom demanded for them fairly good treatment, and especially freedom in the exercise of their religious worship. There were masters who lived on friendly terms and indeed on terms of friendship with their slaves; and there were slaves who were not only highly educated but who had also acquired great possessions with the approval of their masters. The granting of freedom had become more and more frequent, and almost a fixed custom in the case of the death of the master—and even the purchase of freedom by the slave himself became possible. But all this had no firm foundation in law: it depended on the good will of the possessor, for in law the slave remained a chattel. Christianity here

altered nothing, although with its preaching that all were equal before God and that all were brothers one of another, it far surpassed the Stoic doctrine of the universal rights of men. For although Christianity applied this theory seriously in life and let the slave feel in the assembly of the community that he was an equally esteemed Christian brother, yet it also left the legal position as it was. Paul advises the slaves, even when they can gain their freedom, rather to remain slaves, and he sends the fugitive slave Onesimus, who had taken refuge with him and been converted, back to his master Philemon with a wonderfully tender note of recommendation, which contains no word about setting him free. However, if he does not demand his liberation, he at least ensures for the culprit pardon and kind treatment. It was not the external legal relationship that was to be transformed; the ransom of all slaves was too high an aim for the communities; moreover such a reform would only have produced a large number of persons in precarious circumstances.

But the relationship changed on its inner side as soon as the master saw in the slave a Christian

brother for whose treatment he would have to give an account to a higher Master. This Master also laid it upon him as a duty to treat even his heathen slave humanely. On the other hand the slave had in his Christian faith not only a compensation for all ill-treatment which he experienced from his heathen master but also a motive for willing and honourable obedience for God's sake. But in order that the Christian slaves of Christian masters should not take advantage of their position as 'brethren in the Lord' to behave arrogantly and rebelliously, the community took care to impress upon them the duty of submission for the sake of their faith.

Equally with chastity in personal conduct, honesty in dealing with others was enforced as a Christian duty, and that too with an insistence corresponding to the general neglect of it in the heathen world. Every attempt to take an advantage of another is unchristian. If the Christian believes that he is wronged he is not immediately to go to law: if the dispute cannot be settled by a friendly arbitration within the community, let him rather suffer injustice. The communities must take care that their members

do not give offence to the outside world by a disorderly manner of life. In the anxious expectation of the return of the Lord, and the consequent end of the world, there lay the danger of entirely neglecting earthly affairs, of falling into a restless state of spiritual fussiness, even of carrying on a violent political agitation instead of a quiet propaganda. Paul vigorously opposed this tendency when it showed itself in Thessalonica, and in this connexion he uttered that saying which has for all time stamped work as a Christian duty: 'If any will not work, neither let him eat.' Pious begging was naturally repugnant to a man who did not even make use for himself of the missionary's right to support by the community.

Besides domestic and civic duties there are also duties to the Christian community. The closest possible cohesion is aimed at. But this did not everywhere meet with approval; the Corinthians, for example, were of opinion that one did enough for membership of the new religious society if one went occasionally to its assemblies. For the rest they lived as before, for example, went to law and associated with

their non-Christian friends, even when the latter invited them to sacrificial feasts in heathen temples. This Paul rejects decisively and with horror: intercourse in heathen private houses he allows, yet obviously with reluctance. He thinks it a disgrace to the community that Christians should dispute before heathen tribunals. In the Christian assemblies he desires that the idea of brotherly association should be really put into practice.

The demands which the community made on its members were certainly not small, especially in the case of the well-to-do. Some placed the whole of their house at the disposal of the community as a place for meeting; others received the missionary with his assistants, gave lodging to brethren from other communities, looked after the poor and the sick in their own community. To discharge all this labour of love there were in the beginning no responsible officials on whom the burden might be shifted: it was the brotherly duty of every Christian. Deputations to the apostle, as for example that of Stephanas and his companions from Corinth to Ephesus, were also voluntary services which could certainly be

undertaken only by the wealthier members. All communication by letter presupposes such voluntary messengers, and others again who offered them hospitality on the road.

The benevolent activity of the Christians was however by no means confined to the members of the community, to their fellow-believers; all men were to benefit by it. And we shall be safe in assuming that it was just this unrestricted exercise of loving care which gained for Christianity many friends and adherents, especially among the needy.

Throughout it all private property remains absolutely unaffected—there is nowhere the slightest indication of any attempt at communism. In fact, as we saw, the community did not even possess funds of its own. The Christians of this early period were still a long way from the idea of getting rid of one's possessions at any price, as we find it urged in certain philosophers, partly indeed with very utilitarian motives. Nor do we see the practice of almsgiving, as among the Jews, merely for the sake of giving.

It is possible, though it cannot be proved for certain, that definite customs, such as, for

example, that of regular hours of prayer, and probably also definite times for fasting, soon grew up after the Jewish example. In Paul the cry still resounds, 'pray without ceasing.' It goes without saying that Christians did not neglect what was the custom among pious Gentiles as well as Jews, viz. the consecrating of every meal with prayer. In the formula used, if it is the case that there was one, they may have followed the Jews. Marriages, too, undoubtedly did not take place without some religious consecration. Thus Paul insists that, although the existing mixed marriages are not to be dissolved, no fresh ones of a similar character are to be entered upon: when a widow remarries it shall take place 'in the Lord,' i.e. within the Christian community. It is certain that even from the beginning the Christians did not burn their dead in accordance with Graeco-Roman custom, but followed Jewish and Oriental usage in burying them. Doubtless the community as such took part in such ceremonies, in fact it seems as if the communities often appeared to outsiders simply as burial clubs.

The elaboration of a Christian code of conduct

was greatly furthered by the active intercourse which the Gentile Christian communities maintained with one another and also with the Jewish Christian communities of Palestine. At first, indeed, in the Gentile Christian world every community stood by itself in complete independence, in contrast to the state of affairs in Palestine, where in consequence of the central position of the Holy City the community of Jerusalem had the predominance of a mother-community with regard to all the congregations of Jewish Christians. The communities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, etc., were on a footing of complete equality with one another and stood in no relation of dependence either towards Jerusalem or indeed towards the metropolis of the Gentile converts, Antioch. A strong bond of union was of course afforded by the person of the apostle, their common founder. And this spiritual father himself laid strong emphasis on the fraternal relations of his communities to one another. On the one hand he was the converging point for news from all sides, and often enough had deputies from various communities around him; on the other, he desired that the different

communities should be guided by one another: he repeatedly directs the attention of the individualistically inclined Corinthians, who boasted of their own judgment and their freedom, to the custom of the other communities. And as a matter of fact the intercourse between the communities must have been so brisk that it naturally exercised an equalizing influence in shaping the life of the individual communities and their moral code. On this subject, too, we learn hardly anything from the Acts of the Apostles, but can infer a great deal from occasional notices in the Epistles. The neighbouring communities of Colossae and Laodicea exchanged the greetings and letters of the apostle;[1] the household of Chloe, obviously the servants of a lady of rank, came from Corinth to Ephesus;[2] Phoebe, an esteemed woman in Cenchreae, the port of Corinth, whom Paul designates as the servant of the community and his own patroness, travels to Rome.[3] Thessalonica and the exemplary character of its Christian life have been talked about in Macedonia and Achaia and indeed in the whole world.[4] The Philippians

[1] Col. 4^{15} f. [2] I Cor. 1^{11}. [3] Rom. 16^{1}. [4] I Thess. 1^{7}f.

send to Paul not only in Thessalonica and Corinth but even as far as Rome.[1] The followers of the apostle keep the prisoner in constant touch with all his communities.[2] In fact Paul himself also took measures to keep in touch with the primitive community of Jewish Christians by causing his communities to collect for the poor of Jerusalem and to send this collection by a large deputation : he put himself at its head and this became the occasion of his overthrow.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that very varied forces made themselves felt within the wide domain of the Gentile converts. Missionaries such as Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos, although unanimous on the main point, the right of the Gentiles to have the Gospel preached to them free from the trammels of the Law, may yet in practice have worked along very different lines. Only in the case of very few of his fellow-workers did Paul find a full understanding of the specifically free spirit of his missionary and organizing activity. Towards the close of his life complaints became more frequent about his

[1] Phil. 4^{15}f ; II Cor. 11^{9}.
[2] Col. 4^{10} ff ; Phil. 2^{19}, ^{25} ; II Tim. 4^{9}ff, ^{19}ff ; Titus 3^{12}ff.

companions in missionary work. Only Timothy seems to him to be completely reliable: 'I have no one who is so like-minded' (Phil. 2^{20}). This may explain to us the fact that in the communities the unconditional trust in the guidance of the Spirit which we find in Paul is soon replaced by a more statutory regulation of life.

Moreover there was also the great struggle with Judaism, which not only exercised a most lasting influence on the life of Paul, but also became an important factor in the further elaboration of Christianity in the subsequent period.

We saw in the preceding chapter how different tendencies developed in the primitive community itself. Beside the middle party, represented by the disciples of Jesus, there stood two extreme parties: the one, which was usually designated as the party of the Judaizers and soon came under the leadership of James, was strictly Jewish and nationalist and held fast to the idea that the Law was eternally valid and necessary to salvation; the other, that of the Hellenists, originating in a lax Judaism, regarded the Law as a temporally conditioned and transitory institution of a

purely national character, or else gave it a new and wholly spiritual interpretation. It was therefore in a position to offer the Gospel also to the Gentiles. This party was naturally driven more and more out of the narrow limits of Judaism into the wide field of Gentile mission work. The primitive community followed the steps of these Hellenists not without misgivings; the Judaizing party did so with obvious reluctance. The Acts of the Apostles tells us how a sort of inspecting officer was sent in the wake of Philip's mission to the Samaritans, as also into the sphere of the Gentile mission of the Hellenists in Antioch; each time, however, with results favourable to the Hellenists: Peter himself joined in the mission to the Samaritans and Barnabas remained in Antioch. The Judaizing party, however, was by no means satisfied with this. On the contrary, when the work begun by the Hellenists received an unexpected impetus owing to the systematic labour of Paul; when it became clear that it was no longer a question of individual and exceptional Gentile conversions, but of the formation of entire communities of Gentile converts emancipated from the Law, then the

Judaizing party started aggressive work on their own account. The object to be aimed at was not so much to stop the mission to the Gentiles—this was no longer possible—but to direct it along the right lines, to make its success serviceable to Judaism itself. Representatives of the party appeared in Antioch and there declared that real Christianity can only be recognized where there is a previous foundation of Judaism. Certainly Gentiles could be admitted to the Christian communities, but only as proselytes of Judaism, i.e. they must undergo circumcision and take upon themselves the obligation of a complete observance of the Law. When they were thus freed from heathen impurity, they also, by belief in Jesus as the Messiah, might win the right to expect the future spiritual blessings of the Messianic age. In that case brotherly intercourse with them would be possible for the Jewish Christians. But except on this condition all intercourse with these Gentile converts would bring defilement on the circumcised believer; it was even questionable whether they could be regarded as Christians at all—as partakers of salvation.

Certainly this was not the opinion of all Jewish Christians. In Antioch itself the Jewish portion of the community had publicly associated with the Gentile members on brotherly terms, which, indeed, was not possible without the renunciation of many of the prescriptions of the Law and many Jewish customs. Even in Jerusalem a large party thought otherwise, and held that the Gentiles should be willingly recognized as Christian brothers without compulsory circumcision and observance of the Law, if only they themselves, in continuation of the existing custom, might keep their own national code as such and not as the condition of gaining salvation. This was the general feeling in the circle influenced by the immediate disciples of the Lord.

Relying upon it, Paul and Barnabas were able to venture, in opposition to the demands of the Judaizers in Antioch, to appeal directly to the verdict of the authorities of the primitive community. They did not take the step as if they wished thereby to submit themselves to a higher court, though this was the construction afterwards put upon it by the Judaizing party, and even the author of the Acts looks upon it somewhat in

this light: Paul, who has himself given us an account of these proceedings in Galatians c. 2, feels that he is absolutely independent. There is no one who has any authority over him except his Lord. Only, in opposition to the Judaizers, who appeal to the authorities at Jerusalem, let it once for all be set down for the pacification of the communities that the pillars of the original community, Peter and John, and even James, have accorded full recognition to the principles and practice of the mission to the Gentiles. At a meeting in Jerusalem, the so-called Conference of the Apostles (or, in the mediaeval conception, Council of the Apostles), they gave one another their right hands as a sign of mutual recognition. Definitely separated, the mission to the Jews, and the mission to the Gentiles should pursue their paths in peace alongside one another and both be recognized as valid. For the right of the latter was placed beyond question by the facts, namely, by its God-given success. Towards strengthening the society outwardly the only measure agreed upon was that the Gentile communities should allow the burden to be laid upon them of looking after the material wants of

the poor of the original community—so Paul declares. The Acts, to be sure, gives a different account, according to which the original community appears not only as the tribunal before which Paul and Barnabas plead in reply to the accusations of the Judaizing party, but at the same time as the supreme court which imposes definite obligations on the Gentile communities. According to this account the Gentile Christians cannot be recognized unless they take upon themselves at least a minimum of the prescriptions of the Law—the so-called commandments of Noah, which on the Rabbinic view were indispensable for the intercourse between Jews and heathen, and which were meant to provide against defilement by idolatry, by the debauchery so often connected with it, and also by the taking of blood, which was strictly forbidden the Jews. According to the Acts of the Apostles this recognition, limited by these demands, constituting the so-called Apostles' Decree, was sent to the Pauline communities in the form of a circular letter from the apostles and elders at Jerusalem addressed to the community at Antioch, and was enforced by Paul,

at least in the communities among which he had formerly worked. It is now almost universally recognized that this version must take a secondary place in face of that given by Paul himself in Galatians 2. For Paul at a later period, when doubts cropped up in Corinth about the right to eat flesh sacrificed to idols, made no mention of this supposed decision. It can be easily understood how the author of the Acts came to tell the story differently, if we observe the halo with which he in general invests the 'original community.' He cannot bear to think of a mission to the Gentiles absolutely independent of it and its 'apostles': with this high estimate of the authorities at Jerusalem he quite fails to understand Paul's consciousness of independence. In addition, he found in one of his sources the so-called Apostles' Decree, obviously the manifesto of a party at Jerusalem, the followers of James, to some of the Gentile communities of Syria. It is of course conceivable and is suggested by Acts 21^{25}, that as a matter of fact at a later period, long after Paul had abandoned his first mission field, such a circular letter was issued, of which Paul knew nothing until he was informed by

James on his last visit to Jerusalem. By erroneously ante-dating this, and connecting it with the Conference of the missionary leaders at Jerusalem, the author of the Acts has originated the contradiction which has caused and still causes the modern critics so much trouble.[1]

The result of the Conference at Jerusalem undoubtedly meant a great success for Paul and Barnabas. The Judaizers, it seemed, could no longer put obstacles in the way of their mission to the Gentiles. Peter himself came to Antioch to give practical proof of brotherly fellowship, and here he had the same experience as formerly befell Barnabas: impressed by the flourishing communal life, the cordial intercourse of all, irrespective of their former racial separation, he forgot that he was a Jew, disregarded the limits of the Jewish code, and sat down at table without reservation with the uncircumcised Gentile converts. Certainly this was in accordance with the

[1] Let it be plainly said that the explanation which we have here given is by no means universally accepted. Scarcely a year passes which does not produce some fresh attempt at a solution. It would be useless to record them here. The main point, however, that Paul's narrative is correct and cannot be explained away, is firmly established.

mind and spirit of his Lord, by whose side, in the familiar companionship of years, he had absorbed something of this freedom which looked only at what was inner and spiritual and disregarded all ceremonial form and legal trammels. But it was something new as compared with his former practice; for, as Jews among Jews, he and his fellow disciples had naturally continued to live within the frame-work of the Jewish code without feeling themselves cramped by it. But what Peter could do with a clear conscience had the worst construction put upon it by others. Followers of James came to Antioch—we do not know whether by chance or to keep an eye on Peter or on receipt of the news of his 'falling away'; in any case they immediately called him to account and caused him to break off his intercourse with the Gentile converts and confine himself to a narrow circle of Jewish Christians. This is not to be understood in the sense that he entirely withdrew from the Pauline community: he came to its assemblies. But he no longer ate with them at the same table and showed by this abstinence that for him they were unclean. And the man who did this was

Peter, the recognized leader of the disciples, who had stood in the closest relation to the Lord! His attitude was bound to be of the greatest significance. It was not only that he thus set an example to the Jewish Christians—even Barnabas, Paul's fellow-worker for many years, now felt himself suddenly moved to give up sitting at meat with the Gentiles and to join the Jewish Christian circle around Peter; but by his attitude it was clearly proved to the Gentile Christians that they were not looked upon as brethren in the full sense by the leading men, that Jewish law and custom formed a barrier which kept them at a distance from the narrower circle of those who could call themselves disciples of the Lord in a special sense. Hence doubts were bound to be raised whether they were real Christians in the full sense of the word, and whether, being what they were, they had any claim to enter the community of the Lord. A moral compulsion was practised in spite of all the external recognition of the Gentile Christians, for it seemed to be both desirable for the sake of fellowship with such men as Peter and Barnabas and advisable for the sake of making certain of future salvation, to

renounce this freedom from the Law so strongly emphasized by Paul, and to submit to the Jewish way of doing things: to be circumcised and to observe the commandments about eating. It was a very threatening situation for the continued existence of the Pauline Gospel, and we can understand that the apostle to the Gentiles, who constantly followed up all questions to their ultimate consequences, was extremely irritated by the behaviour of Peter, but provoked above all by the falling away of Barnabas, his friend and fellow-worker of many years, and so saw himself compelled to take vigorous measures. Before the assembled community he reproached Peter with the fickle and vacillating and unjustifiable character of his behaviour—he calls it nothing but cowardice and hypocrisy: the man who has shown that he has outgrown (although only temporarily) the observance of the Law has no longer any right to put any pressure (even if it be only a moral pressure) on others to fulfil the Law. Belief in Christ means for the Jews the renunciation of the whole system of justification by the Law. The very fact that a man is a Christian exempts him from heathen pollution.

For it is no longer a heathen life that he lives, any more than it is a life in accordance with the Jewish Law: it is a new Christian life. God's grace does not reach its full measure till all conformity to the Law is renounced. These are great sayings, as Paul himself brings them before us in his comprehensive summary in Galatians 2. There can be no doubt that they produced an impression. Certainly neither Peter nor Barnabas could escape the force of this exposition, which went back to first principles and behind which stood the whole personality of Paul, with the power which he drew from intimate experience and the brilliancy of his trained dialectic. Hence at a later period we find Barnabas again in complete accord with him.

Modern criticism first put the significance of this 'scene at Antioch,' about which we read absolutely nothing in the Acts of the Apostles, in its true light: but it at first fell into an easily understood exaggeration when it believed that it saw the fundamental divergence between Peter and Paul, Judaism and Paulinism, here coming into evidence, and indeed found in Paul's words the declaration of war which ushered in

a protracted conflict between the two divisions of Christianity—a conflict that determined its whole further development. As far as Peter and the more moderate Jewish Christians were concerned, Paul obviously gained the victory. For this, as it seems to us, a sure proof is afforded by the well-known story of Cornelius, which the Acts of the Apostles c. 10 merely places too early. What Peter had at first done in Antioch without any misgivings, but had afterwards given up under the pressure of Judaizing objections, we now see him doing here, reluctantly, it is true, but in consequence of an express divine revelation: he goes into a Gentile house, preaches there, and when unmistakable indications are given of faith and the bestowal of the Spirit, he receives the centurion Cornelius with his family, although uncircumcised, into the Christian community, and then enjoys without any qualms of conscience the hospitality of this Gentile household. For this he is naturally called to account in Jerusalem, but, like Paul on a previous occasion, he is able to justify himself brilliantly by pointing to the will of God, which clearly revealed itself in the facts.

But there are always men who refuse to learn anything even from the most obvious facts. Their convictions are, in their eyes, irrevocable pronouncements of the Deity, from which nothing is able to detach them. This was the case with the extreme Judaizing party. They did not give up the struggle against Paul; on the contrary, they followed him and sought to transform his work to their own liking.

After the negotiations at Jerusalem and Antioch he had separated from his friend Barnabas and his former missionary sphere in Syria and Cilicia, and had sought a new field for his activity in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, with brilliant success, as we saw. In Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus, flourishing communities grew up of essentially Gentile character. Certainly they were often unripe (we emphasized this very feature) even as regards morality, but the healthy and vigorous breath of the Christian spirit was upon them. In the atmosphere of Pauline freedom a genuine evangelical life began to shape itself. Then the Judaizers came to Corinth as well as to Galatia. For them, too, the Jewish synagogue formed a

starting-point from which to get into touch with the inhabitants, not however in order to win new circles of converts for the gospel but to bring back the Pauline communities to the synagogue. These 'false apostles,' as Paul names them, felt themselves to be Jews more than Christians. Within the synagogue they wished to attach themselves to Jesus and his Gospel, but they were willing to associate only with those who were circumcised and faithful to the Law. Yet they went out into the wide Gentile world, impelled by that propagandist zeal which we see Jesus himself blame as one of the prominent characteristics of the Scribes, and at the same time goaded on by jealousy of the unexampled success of the great missionary to the Gentiles. On the one hand they wished to keep their fellow-countrymen together, to protect them from the danger of falling away from the Law of their fathers, which threatened them from Paul: on the other hand they tried to win an influence over the Gentiles who had been converted by Paul himself and to bring them over into their camp. In Galatia it is clear that they openly made the demand for circumcision and observance of the Law: in

Corinth they seem to have gone to work more prudently by taking advantage of a difference existing between the apostle and the community in order in the first place thoroughly to undermine his authority. The perfidy with which they did this, by circulating the vulgarest personal accusations, as well as the fact that they started their propaganda on a well-organized mission field instead of breaking new ground among the heathen, shows that Paul had a right to designate them as 'false brethren,' 'servants of Satan,' whose ultimate aim, in a word, was the perversion and destruction of the Gospel. They themselves naturally thought otherwise; we shall venture to give them the credit of acting in good faith when they maintained that they wished to raise the inadequate and incomplete Pauline form of Christianity to the true height of the Gospel by the addition of the Law, and to lead the Gentile communities into perfect righteousness by imparting to them their own Jewish legalism. There were in reality two different ideals which here came into collision, two fundamentally different conceptions of religion and Christianity in particular. The one wished to exalt Judaism,

as being finally authorized by the holy law of God, to the supreme position of the universal and final religion; it saw in Christianity only a special kind of Judaism, but in doing so this conception of religion remained at the Old Testament stage, which takes a juridical view of the relation between man and God. The other conception saw in Christianity something new. It saw religion resting on God's free grace in Christ, and man's acceptance of it in faith. This view involved at the same time the admission of the relativity and transitoriness of the whole Old Testament legal system and the Jewish code of conduct founded on it. If the former conception held to the external form of the manifestation of Jesus, the latter had grasped his inmost being. That he had lived as a Jew among Jews was of no importance as compared with the universally human element which formed the heart and core of his preaching—the decisive characteristic of his conduct. Quite apart from personal questions this conception was bound to prevail; it had on its side the higher justification of history. This was strengthened by the personal superiority of Paul, who also had moral

right on his side: he could proudly repel all accusations and expose the tactics of his opponents in all their meanness. Hence he gained the victory over them in Galatia as well as in Corinth, and also in Rome, where during his imprisonment this internal conflict between the Christian factions found an echo particularly painful to him. His conception of Christianity as a new religion, founded, it is true, on the Old Testament, but independent of Judaism, prevailed all along the line.

The struggle, however, was very severe and protracted, the resistance obstinate, and in the end the victory by no means absolute. The conception of religion represented by the Judaizing party, namely, that it is a contract between God and man, corresponds much more to the general feeling of mankind than the doctrine, derived by Paul from the Gospel of Jesus, of the unconditionally free grace of God, which likewise requires unconditionally free surrender on the part of sinful man. What brings deliverance and consolation to the burdened conscience is for the average man either an incomprehensible mystery or else a fatal licence to dispense with

all moral effort. Hence we shall not be surprised if Paul indeed emerged victorious from that great contest—*his* letters were preserved, of his opponents we know only through him—but yet in the end remained misunderstood; or if, in the following period, we see a new form of legalism elaborated in his own communities, which, in opposition, it is true, to the Jewish invocation of the Old Testament, appealed to the Gospel, but yet stood in fundamental contradiction to it.

Moreover, it seems as if here and there Paul himself paved the way for such a development. His exalted trust in the spontaneous activity of the Spirit in the communities did not always hold out. In face of gross abuses which he found in his communities, he intervened in the spirit of a law-giver: thus he wished personally to 'regulate' the festival of the Lord's supper in Corinth on his next visit, and in the same way he obviously aimed more and more at a fixed system of moral instruction in his communities. If the new Christian mode of life with all its virtues always appears to him as the fruit of the Spirit, yet he builds as it were a trellis in order to direct aright the growth of this fruit. But after all

we must not over-estimate the significance of this Judaizing struggle: it is an episode which penetrated deep into the life of Gentile Christianity, but it does not form a constituent factor in its development. Such struggles were only violent attacks of fever brought on by infection, and it is a testimony to the soundness and vigour of the Pauline communities that their constitution so quickly threw them off.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC AGE

(The Growth of the Church)

The sixth decade inflicted blows of deep-reaching significance on the young Christian communities. It first robbed them of their renowned leaders and missionaries, it then took from them their original home, and so sealed the transition from the Judaeo-Christian soil of Palestine to the world of Graeco-Roman civilization.

On July 19th A.D. 64 there broke out that devastating conflagration which raged for sixteen days and laid in ashes ten out of the fourteen quarters of Rome. Popular rumour accused the Emperor Nero himself of having started the fire; he was said to have looked down on the terrible spectacle from the vantage-ground of his palace and to have sung of the fall of Troy. In spite

of everything possible being done by the government, first to extinguish the fire, and then to compensate the sufferers and rebuild the city on a magnificent scale, the rumour still persisted: The people must have victims. The choice fell, —how, we do not know, perhaps on the initiative of the Jews—on the Christians, of whom the populace knew nothing, except that they were a strange secret society of whom any abomination could be believed. They were tortured to death with every refinement of cruelty at public games which the Emperor gave to the people in his Vatican gardens. This was the first of the more important persecutions of Christians in the empire, though it appears to have been confined entirely to the capital, and even there not to have completely exterminated the Christian community.

The Roman tradition, which is probably to be traced back as far as the end of the first century, makes the apostles Peter and Paul fall victims to this Neronian persecution. We have no means of controlling the tradition with any certainty. That Peter suffered martyrdom seems indeed to be firmly established by I Pet. 5^{1}, and John 21^{18}, but the place and time remain open questions.

In the case of Paul we have no certain information after the close of the Acts of the Apostles, according to which, on his appeal to the imperial court, he was taken as a prisoner from Caesarea to Rome, lived there for two years in semi-captivity and worked without hindrance. The Pastoral Epistles (i.e., the Epistles to Timothy and Titus) on the one hand, and an old tradition of a missionary journey to Spain on the other, have given rise to an inference that Paul was once more set at liberty, and did not suffer martyrdom until later—in the Neronian persecution just alluded to. It seems to me more probable that the first trial ended in his execution, presumably as early as the year 63, in consequence of things taking some turn unknown to us. (We might think of the influence, so fateful for Christianity, which Poppaea, who was on very intimate terms with the Jews, exercised over Nero.) And I conjecture further that Peter then came to Rome and there fell a victim to the Neronian persecution in the year 64. But yet these are admittedly only conjectures.

It is probable that the head of the primitive community had fallen as early as the year 62,

during the reign of terror which the High-Priest Ananias, the son of Annas, carried on for a short time after the death of the procurator Festus. Jewish-Christian legend has embellished and glorified the martyrdom of James the Just, the brother of the Lord. But the fact remains that, in spite of his strict conformity to the Law, he died as a martyr for his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, not long before the outbreak of the great Jewish war, in which the Christians believed they were meant to recognize a divine judgment on that judicial murder.

This sanguinary war raged from 66 to 73, and was brought on outwardly by the want of understanding, the caprice, the greed and the cruelty of the later imperial procurators. The actual cause, however, was the peculiar characteristics and turbulence of the Jewish people, who made a point of refusing to accommodate themselves to the Roman administration, which after all was well ordered, and allowed themselves to be carried away by Messianic extravagances. Although the Jews were rent by faction and slaughtered one another in Jerusalem even when it was encircled by the enemy, yet it

cost the Romans the greatest efforts to subdue the insurrection. Nero had to send his ablest general, Vespasian, who in the end had at his disposal four legions and numerous auxiliary troops, including those of the Jewish king Agrippa II. The fall of Nero and the events of the year of the three emperors which finally brought Vespasian himself to the throne, only put a temporary stop to the operations. Titus continued the work of his father. After the northern part of the country was subdued in the years 66–69, the siege of the capital began in April, 70. Bit by bit it was taken from the northern side. On 5th Panemos (July) the citadel fell, the Jews still holding out in the Temple. In fact they persisted in offering the daily morning and evening sacrifice until the 17th Panemos; then they were obliged to discontinue it 'for want of men.' On 8th—10th of the following month the court of the Temple was at length taken by storm and, contrary to the express orders of Titus, the magnificent structure perished by fire. There was no longer to be any Temple or any sacrifice at Jerusalem. In view of the burning Temple Titus was hailed

as 'imperator' by his legions: but it was not until two months later that the upper part of the city was taken, and the last fortresses in the eastern part of the country did not fall until the year 73. By this war Israel was annihilated as a nation and deprived of its place of worship: henceforth it lived even in Palestine as in the regions of the Dispersion. The place of the Temple was taken by the synagogues, and the authority of the high-priest passed over to the leader of the Scribes. Although this had long been prepared for, and therefore was not so keenly felt, yet it was one of the most deep-reaching of religious revolutions. What was begun in the year 70 did not reach its conclusion until the reign of Hadrian, in the year 135, when, after the bloody suppression of a fresh Jewish insurrection, the so-called war of Barkokhba, in which, along with the pseudo-Messiah Barkokhba the Scribe Rabbi Akiba played the chief part, there arose on the holy ground of Jerusalem a new heathen city dedicated to the Roman Jupiter, Aelia Capitolina, entry into which was forbidden to all the circumcised on penalty of death.

These events could not remain without influ-

ence on the development of Christianity. Spiritually, indeed, the Jewish Christians were more prepared for the loss of the Temple worship than their fellow countrymen. As regards the inner Christian life of the community the catastrophe cannot have caused any essential changes. As to what it meant for the Messianic hopes, whether it led to a progressive spiritualization and weakening of the thought of the Second Coming, our sources give us absolutely no information.

But its external effects were all the more considerable. The Jewish Christians of Palestine had taken no part in the insurrection; there is a legend that, before the outbreak of the war, warned by a divine voice, they had abandoned the capital and settled in Pella on the east bank of the Jordan. It was natural that, with their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, they should look on at the great death-struggle of their nation without taking any part, but it was just as natural that their inactivity should be repaid by bitter enmity. From this period dates their exclusion from the synagogue and the synagogues' curse against the Nazarenes. During the agita-

tion of the Barkokhba period the enmity of the Jews increased until it took the form of a violent persecution of the Christians. And yet the latter also, in losing the Temple and Jerusalem, had lost not only their rallying-point but also the important connecting-link with the Gentile Christians, who up till then had recognized the original community at Jerusalem as the cradle from which they had sprung. The fall of Jerusalem, which was certainly felt deeply by the Jewish Christians, was regarded in the outer world as a divine judgment on the unbelieving Jews who were so ready to murder their prophets. The existence of communities of Jewish Christians was almost ignored. These, however, as being circumcised, could have no fellow-feeling, at least at first, with the new Gentile community of Aelia Capitolina.

In this way the tie was severed which had united them with their people; the connexion, however weak it might have been, which had existed between them and their non-Jewish fellow-believers, was broken off: they were isolated. And in this isolation they grew stiff and torpid. It is scarcely probable that they

were able to carry on a successful propaganda among the Jews of a later period. We can, it is true, follow up the traces of Jewish Christianity as far as the fourth and fifth centuries, but it remains without influence on the great ecclesiastical development. The communities lived in rural seclusion, in Galilee and in the Hauran right up to the gates of Damascus. They are led by kinsmen of the Lord, and keep entirely to the Jewish way of life; yet with this difference that the one party regarded the Mosaic law only as a national code and hence recognized the Gentile Christians; while the others, in continuation of the strictly Judaizing view, looked upon the Mosaic Law as unconditionally binding, and so repudiated the Gentile Christians. The former party, therefore, was inclined to unite with the great Church: the latter came under the spell of a steadily increasing rigidity and ossification. At a later period other dogmatic differences came in from the outside with regard to Christology, the acceptance or rejection of the Virgin Birth, etc. From the east, moreover, Gnostic ideas made their way even into Jewish Christianity and lent it an unaccustomed diver-

sity of colour, and indeed, for a short time, a new power of expansion in the form of Elkesaitism, propagated by Alcibiades in Rome. But the part which Jewish Christianity had to play in the history of the world was over. In future the only people who took any interest in it were learned ecclesiastics and heresy hunters.

Quite different was the development in the Gentile world: here in the so-called post-apostolic age we see the ripening of the seed sown at an earlier period by Paul and his companions.

As to the actual spread of the new religion it must be confessed that our information is scanty. In Asia Minor, besides the Pauline communities of Ephesus and Laodicea, we hear of those of Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia (Rev. 1^{11}), and also Magnesia and Tralles (Epistles of Ignatius). More important is the report of Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan (shortly before 113) that in his province, in consequence of the Christian propaganda, the temples of the gods are deserted and flesh offered in sacrifice no longer finds a purchaser. It is true that he also announces

that many have withdrawn, some long ago, and now a still greater number, owing to the vigorous enforcement of the imperial decree against clubs. Still Christianity must have been an important factor in the life of the people of Asia Minor. But it must also have developed vigorously in Macedonia and Greece, in Rome and Gaul. It penetrated into the highest circles if the conjecture is correct that the ex-consul Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, relatives of the Emperor, were punished on account of their adherence to Christianity. And assuredly Egypt also had then been included within the sphere of Christian propaganda.

That there was no cessation of missionary activity is proved by the existence of professional apostles, wandering missionaries, who, according to the regulations in the so-called Didaché or 'Teaching of the Apostles' (a work preserved to us from this period), were not allowed to remain more than two days at the most in an already constituted community. But besides the professional missionary activity of particular individuals, the unconscious propaganda of the existing communities must now have been more

important than hitherto. Around the already existing centre there collected an ever-increasing number of people who perceived that here vital forces were at work. Such persons found their consciences touched by the denunciation of a Christian prophet, or felt their hearts comforted by the Gospel, or had thankfully experienced the benevolence of the Christians. Many may also have been induced by ignoble motives: there was a chance of taking advantage of the Christians' good nature: a man who had gained a reputation by any ascetic performances could easily find some part to play among them (compare Lucian's satire on Peregrinus Proteus), and it had not yet become so clear how dangerous it was to be a Christian. Apart from that one Neronian persecution and perhaps a few convictions under Domitian, which affected only the highest circles, according to Pliny's testimony there had been no prosecutions of Christians as such in Rome up till the time of Trajan. The instance of Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, who was condemned to fight with the wild beasts and was sent in chains to Rome, seems to have been only an isolated case. Nevertheless the Christ-

ians were exposed to the caprice of the officials and the hatred of the populace, since they could not appeal to the privileges of the Jews owing to their worship not being authorised by the state. The absence of images seemed to be a denial of God, and the symbolism at their sacred meals was grossly misinterpreted by outsiders, who asserted that they butchered little children in order to drink their blood and, as brothers and sisters, indulged in the lowest orgies. It was a long time (not until the third century) before these popular rumours died away. In their place there began, though not until the reign of Decius, in the year 250, the systematic persecution by the government, who recognized the political danger of a state within a state (for this is what the universal church had grown to in the meantime).

The chief work in the post-apostolic age was the inner elaboration of the life of the community. There were still men possessed with the Holy Spirit, charismatic speakers, prophets and teachers, who travelled as wandering teachers from community to community, and from time to time settled down somewhere, but yet always retained an independent position, a superior authority, for

they were called and sent forth by the Holy Spirit himself. Hence they enjoyed complete freedom of speech, and naturally came to be the communities' leaders in prayer, for which they received a special share of the contributions in kind. To be sure, doubts began to arise whether it really was always the Holy Spirit who spoke in these people, and whether gross self-interest did not often deceive the communities by putting on the prophet's mantle. Men came to demand proofs and to formulate certain rules by means of which the true and the false prophet were to be distinguished (cf. The Teaching of the Apostles, and the 'Shepherd' of Hermas, also I John 4^1 ff.). Indeed it even came about that communities sought to keep these 'inspired men' (πνευματικοί) at a distance, with their uncontrollable and encroaching authority (John, Ep. III). In their stead the communities' own representatives and officials became more and more prominent. From the first-fruits, and the authority which naturally attached to them, there were developed in time select boards of 'Elders,' who directed the community. For the discharge of the services which in the beginning

were voluntarily carried out by individuals in the name and on behalf of the community, definite officials were now appointed to a continually increasing extent in the form of episcopoi (bishops) and diakonoi (deacons), such as we already found at an earlier period in Philippi. On behalf of the community they undertook the care of the poor and the sick, the rendering of aid to prisoners, the lodging of strangers, the intercourse with foreign communities: they also had important functions at divine service, especially in the apportionment of the contributions at the common meals.

The development no doubt ran on very different lines in different places. The systematic appointment of presbyters, which the Acts of the Apostles ascribes to Paul himself (cf. p. 54 above) seems not to have taken place in Corinth, for example, till towards the end of the first century. The unpleasant consequences can be traced in the troubles dealt with in the so-called First Epistle of Clement, a letter from the Roman community to the community at Corinth, issued about the year 95: the Corinthian prophetic ministry obviously felt itself cramped by the

new system, and its protest was finally so far successful that presbyters appointed by election were deprived of their office. The Roman community intervened on behalf of these office-bearers in opposition to the prophetic ministry; in fact, obviously in consequence of the longer existence of the order of presbyters, it had a theory according to which the succession to office was said to be regulated by the apostles in virtue of a divine right. Yet in Rome also we see traces a few decades later of the struggle for precedence between prophets, confessors, and ascetics on the one hand, and the presbyters on the other. It is in Asia Minor that we seem first to meet with the institution of a separate bishop for each community—perhaps after the example of municipal administration. Here we find about the year 110, but obviously not yet firmly established, the subordination of both presbyters and deacons to the one bishop, who is to be the head and centre of the community. From the combination of this Asiatic arrangement of a single bishop with the Roman theory of apostolic succession, there arose about the middle of the second century the uniform Catholic constitution

of the Church, with its three orders of clergy—Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons. The bishop is henceforth the representative of the community in every respect. He admits into the community and excludes from it: he conducts the correspondence with the other communities; he directs the whole of the community's work; he also leads the assemblies for worship, and he is the liturgist and preacher of the community. His authority was greatly strengthened by the struggle with heretical tendencies, which were organized for the most part in the monarchical form of a philosophical school; all authority in the matter of teaching was finally absorbed into that of the bishop. His authority triumphed when, towards the end of the second century, the last great attempt to reanimate the old prophetic order and make it prevail against the officials of the church, namely, the movement known as Montanism, was driven from the field. But to accomplish this the officials of the church had surrounded themselves with the halo of spiritual gifts; Ignatius, the bishop, speaks in a state of prophetic ecstasy, and Cyprian, again, appeals to revelations which had been granted to him as bishop.

It cannot be denied that this repression of the free utterances of the Spirit means in many respects a loss. But considering the various disturbances that result, especially in Corinth, we shall have to confess that this victory of the principle of order is a cause for congratulation. There is the additional fact that for the most part it was not so much a case of suppression, as of the necessity, that naturally followed from the abatement of spiritual enthusiasm, of finding some substitute for the now decayed government in the name of the Spirit. All great historical movements which begin with a state of enthusiasm have been obliged to go through this process if they were not to suffer disorganization. Only in fixed forms is it possible to make certain of transmitting the real nature of anything: formlessness inspired by enthusiasm melts away and evaporates.

The fixing of the forms of worship was closely bound up with the consolidation of the constitution. The leadership of the assemblies for worship passed to a continually increasing extent from the hands of the prophets into those of the officials of the community. The congregation

which in the beginning had taken an active part in the proceedings now took up an increasingly passive attitude: their co-operation was limited to a few liturgical responses. Speaking with tongues soon ceased entirely; the harangues of the prophets were replaced by the homilies of the bishop or presbyter and gradually came to have a fixed form, while the prophetic address found a place, if admitted at all, only in the secondary services. At an earlier period skill in the reading aloud of extracts from the Bible had been esteemed as a special gift of the Spirit, but now readers were appointed for this particular purpose.

Extempore prayers, formerly regarded as inspired by the Spirit, tended more and more to assume stereotyped forms, which were usually repeated, until at last their place was taken by prescribed formularies. Thus the Christian service of prayer and praise approximated more and more to the firmly established type that prevailed in the synagogue, and many of the forms were directly shared by both, such as the reading aloud of Scripture, the address by the leader, and prayers. Moreover, sacred songs, and in truth not only Old Testament psalms

but also Christian poems, must have formed part of the worship, but whether they were rendered by the whole congregation, by a choir, or by individuals, we do not know.

Alongside this service of prayer and praise, but originally distinct from it, we find the communal meals, which took place in the evening. On Trajan's prohibition of *hetairiai* (i.e. political clubs) the Lord's Supper was transferred to the morning and in consequence assumed a different form: instead of a regular meal it became a purely liturgical act, like our own celebrations: often the wine was omitted, as being unseemly in the morning, and the recipients contented themselves with bread and water. The old communal meals were preserved only here and there in the form of love-feasts (agapai), which then really served for the feeding of the poor. The Lord's supper in its new form as Eucharist became a more and more solemn ceremony, and developed in the direction of the later Mass. To it, as well as to baptism, a more and more mysterious character was ascribed. Both were regarded as holy ceremonies, performed by consecrated officiating priests, by means of which a

definite consecration, blessings of a spiritual and also of a bodily nature, were thought to be conferred on the congregation, who remained absolutely passive. Out of the reasonable service of worship in the spirit and mutual edification, there had again arisen a priestly and theurgic performance, a religious drama producing mysteriously magical effects.

But this is not found till we reach the final offshoots of this development. The Word still produced an effect, and the examples we have of the preaching of this period show that it was vigorous and active in a moral direction. It did not aim at arousing holy feelings and solemn moods, but rather vigorous resolves and practical action. It was here that the Gospel proved that it was still living. The theurgic development was only a tribute which Christianity paid to its age.

The Christian communities proved themselves a great school of moral training. What Paul had begun, the communities themselves now continued. They had the advantage that by this time a permanent nucleus of members educated in the Christian spirit was everywhere

available, and that fixed forms of moral conduct had been elaborated, which encompassed the individual members like a protecting rampart. It can be proved that the average morality was constantly rising, although with the waning of spiritual enthusiasm the danger of secularization began to threaten the ever-expanding communities. The complaints which we hear are chiefly concerned with the worldliness of the rich, their lives of pleasure and luxury, the neglect of brotherly love and charity. Here and there we encounter instances of fraud. Cases of gross immorality, however, lie beyond the horizon of the communities. The Christian education of the children did its work. The relation between master and slave was put on a firm basis by custom. The Christian now realizes that the Christian community is his mother, his home, which has full rights over him. From the cradle to the grave his life is subjected to the influence of the community, and the blessing of the Church is invoked on all its chief events. But where a member has wandered from the right course—and such cases seem to have occurred, especially in business life—he is immediately exposed to

the criticism of the community, to reprimand, and to public discipline. Whoever will not submit to punishment is expelled. But even the discipline is still exercised in the spirit of Christian freedom and brotherly love.

That which strikes us as great in the communities is pre-eminently this, that they treat seriously the demand of Jesus to forgive and rather to suffer injustice than to inflict it. Still greater is their benevolent activity. And perhaps the noblest feature is the organization of a system of charity, which was extremely successful in combining the two principles of helpful kindness and educative regularity. Travelling brethren were hospitably looked after in every way for two or three days: if anyone then wished to stay longer he had to earn his own living, but the community procured him work. Christian vagabondage was not tolerated. In this connexion the communities felt their solidarity more and more strongly: the travelling Christian had to prove his claims by a letter of recommendation from his home community. The communities exchanged their experiences by letter and by deputations. Especially in the case of the Roman

community is the care for all other communities worthy of our praise. It knew how to utilize its relations with the imperial court in the interest of Christian brethren even as far removed as the most distant mines in the penal colonies.

It cannot indeed be denied that a certain tendency towards legalism begins to make itself felt: the members of the community allow the Old Testament and its Law to exercise a noticeable influence in shaping their communal life. They even begin to make the sayings of the Lord into a kind of new law for the community. Although their relations with the synagogue were hostile, yet they came much into contact with it, and the result was that, instead of preserving their own distinctive characteristics, they approximated to it, concealing from themselves by small external differences the fact that they had given in to their opponent in principle. Thus we find two fast-days in the week, as among the Jews, the only difference being that other days are chosen, Wednesday and Friday instead of Monday and Thursday: similarly, a prayer is appointed to be said three times a day, but the text of the prayer is Christian instead of Jewish, the Lord's

Prayer taking the place of the so-called *Shemoneh Esreh* (Prayer of the Eighteen Petitions).

Along with the legal spirit the tendency towards asceticism gains the upper hand at the same time. It must indeed be recognized that the communities as such never yielded to the temptation to make asceticism the specific morality of Christianity. Attempts to make abstinence from marriage or from the consumption of wine and meat obligatory on all Christians were always rejected as heretical. A firm hold was maintained on the genuine evangelical principles of positive morality. At the same time, however, the individual was not only accorded the right to live an ascetic life on his own account, but such performances were esteemed and admired, and this led to the conception of a higher and a lower Christian morality. Only in the form of such a twofold morality could the evangelical way of life finally maintain its position against the overwhelming onset of the ascetic movement, which at that time permeated the spirit of the age. But here too the post-apostolic age displays a comparatively large amount of common sense: attempts are made to counteract the over-

estimation of asceticism, and arrogance on the part of such holy men is severely reprobated.

This asceticism, which rests on a dualistic philosophy and aims ultimately at emancipation from the senses, is not to be confused with the indifference which characterizes the Christianity of this period with regard to all questions of public life, of culture, of art and science. There is never any question of politics and the like. It is true that, in accordance with the apostolic injunction, the authorities are prayed for, even where all that is expected from them is hostility and persecution. But at the same time men expect and long for the collapse of the empire and indeed of all government—not in the sense of anarchic revolution, but with faith in God's promises of a glorious future. This lively expectation of the Second Advent, nourished by old and new apocalypses, is retained by primitive Christianity to the end, in spite of all the disappointments which were experienced in this respect. But yet it only half explains the indifference to the things of this world. The deepest ground of this lies rather in the one-sidedness which is characteristic of enthusiasm—primitive Christianity

is interested only in the things of religion and nothing else. This may seem to be a weakness, but it is at the same time its strength. It is owing to this that Christianity has been so successful in the world.

It is true that other tendencies make themselves felt even during this period: the Greek mind seizes on Christianity in order to get an answer to its speculative questions as to the origin of the world: the half-Oriental, half-Hellenistic religious medley of that period draws the Gospel into the vortex of its mysticism, which had grown up on the foundation of Nature-religion. A purely moral religion is transformed into a complicated religious philosophy, a fanciful and magical system of religion, which has lost touch with real history, with the Old Testament preparation for the Gospel and its Jewish foundation. In this system the kernel of Christianity—the historical Jesus and his Gospel—is sometimes pushed on one side and obscured, sometimes actually sublimated and lost altogether.

We have already seen the ingenious Alexandrian, Apollos, working alongside Paul and by artifices of allegorical interpretation presenting

Christianity as Greek wisdom. Hence it is certain that the attempts to commend it to the educated as the rational religion, the revealed philosophy, began as early as our period; the eternal divine world-reason, which was at work in the creation and shows itself continually active in sustaining the world, in a word, the 'Logos' of the Stoic school, was supposed to have been manifested in Jesus: his mission was to impart a rational theory of life. These fundamental ideas of Christian apologetics of the second and third centuries are already met with in the period with which we are dealing. Men begin, for example, to rest belief in the Resurrection not so much on the fact of the resuscitation of Jesus (I Cor. 15) as on rational considerations, and to illustrate it by the story of the phoenix (cf. First Epistle of Clement, 24, 25).

More important, because resting on a religious basis, was the other tendency, that towards syncretism. Since the days of Alexander, Hellenism had blended the cultures of all the numerous nations of the east into an apparently unified whole, and similarly out of the religions of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece a religious atmosphere, if we may say so,

had been formed, which, finding expression in innumerable separate cults modelled on the Greek mysteries, often combined exalted ideas with very low and unspiritual practices. Probably here too speculations as to the origin and nature of the world played a large part. But the central point of the whole was the craving for the salvation of the soul. That man is not only a physical being, but the vehicle of something higher; that this divine spark must be freed from the prison-house of nature and matter; that the soul attains this end by recollecting its origin; and that thus knowledge, 'gnosis,' i.e. acquaintance with reality and appearance, is necessary for salvation—this is the deep religious underlying idea. But at the same time, in accordance with Greek feeling, the primacy in religious matters, is assigned in this gnosis to the intellect—the rational faculty of cognition. To this was added, to be sure, as a most regretable accompaniment, magical superstition. The whole world at that time was dominated by an astrological fatalism, of which the centre was Babylon. The fatalistic school regarded the stars as the source of all that happened, and fondly

imagined that it could foretell the destinies of men from their configurations. Hence deliverance from matter had to be supplemented by liberation from the power of these semi-divine beings, the spirits of the stars. But this could only be accomplished if the soul gained control over these hostile spirits ; it must know the effective magical formulas. Hence an element of the grossest superstition came into Gnosticism. Moreover, both its intellectualism and its superstition were wanting in moral aim. Even in its highest forms this religious medley always betrays its foundation in Nature-religion : the reunion with the divine Source which is here aimed at, is conceived of under a naturalistic and mystical form, not as personal and moral. In the state of ecstasy a momentary foretaste of it is experienced. Deliverance is the central thought : not however from moral guilt, but from physical fetters. So far as the thought of sin and guilt is present—and it is by no means wanting—it is given a physical turn : the mystic wants to escape from sin as a physical force, but knows nothing of the forgiveness of sin in the sense of moral guilt. From this it follows that the only moral demand

that is made consists in asceticism, emancipation from the senses, the mortification of the φύσις —man's physical nature as the seat of sin; while at times the feeling of being raised above all moral scruples in the possession of gnosis, with its knowledge and magic power, brings about a transformation of asceticism into the shameless orgies of the oldest Nature-religion with its deification of the reproductive faculty.

We cannot maintain that Christianity appropriated and utilized all this world of thought—the gospel had too little affinity with it: we can on the other hand say that Christianity was drawn within the circle of this religious medley; the latter first borrowed from it particular motives, and afterwards came more and more strongly under the influence of the Christian spirit. The great Gnostic Schools of the second century, which lasted here and there to a late period as secondary churches, are really Christian products. Here, however, we are only concerned with the beginnings. As early as the time of Paul we can observe them in the Phrygian communities: afterwards we meet them everywhere that Christianity is found, especially in Syria and Egypt,

but not less in Rome. The fundamental feature which they have in common is the conception of Christ as a spiritual being, who descends through all the upper spheres to the earth, in order to remind men of their higher origin, and to impart to them the knowledge of the way of return, together with the necessary magic formulas. The Gnostics took offence at the humanity of this Divine Being, and altogether rejected his death upon the cross : the Divine Christ possessed only a phenomenal body (Docetism) : he was only apparently crucified—in reality he escaped, leaving behind the symbol of the cross as the great mystery. This fundamental idea, which is worked out in many different ways, found a metaphysical foundation in complicated speculations about æons. These speculations were mostly taken from ancient mythology, and only clothed in a Hellenistic dress. As regards morality, however, we see side by side—and partly at violent war with one another—various tendencies, some towards strict asceticism and others towards the most unbridled licence.

For the knowledge of primitive Christianity these Gnostic developments are less important

in themselves than the way in which they are opposed by the representatives of Catholic Christianity. It goes without saying that the strictest separation was insisted on with reference to the sects which elevated immorality to the position of a principle, and even sought a metaphysical foundation for it (Jude, Revelation 2 and 3). But even with regard to others the communities showed themselves exclusive: they expelled from their midst those Gnostics who, as 'spiritual men,' imagined that they were superior to ordinary Christians, rightly recognizing that this was not the spirit of Jesus Christ. (Compare the change in the conception of πνευματικός from the early Christian meaning of 'inspired man' to the dualistic and naturalistic meaning of 'spiritual man.') But there was as yet no attempt at a learned refutation of these systems, which in part assumed the credit of being strictly scientific; it is only from the end of the second century onwards that theologians seek to prove that the Gnostics are dependent on Greek philosophy, and to refute system with system. As yet Christians had no theology and wanted none. Speculation as such was

rejected as being useless and dangerous. 'Sound teaching' is confined to the simple transmission of the facts of salvation and to the practical admonitions of the gospel. Primitive Christianity here shows itself in all its representatives as the eminently practical and moral religion. Whereas even in the case of the most earnest representatives of Gnosticism, men find something blameworthy in the absence of the practical application of Christianity, in the lack of brotherliness and the joyous confession of one's creed, on the other hand they employ all their powers and take a special pride in making Christianity a real religion of love. This attitude afforded at the same time the most effective check to the ascetic tendencies from which, as we have already seen, even the Catholic Christian circles could not escape. It also preserved, above all, the fundamental character of the Gospel—its universalism, namely, that religion was for all, the uneducated as well as the highly educated, in contrast to the religion of the clever speculative thinker, 'the spiritual man.' 'Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth' (I Cor. 8[1]).

It is natural that primitive Christianity should

not issue from this struggle wholly unaffected. Paul, when he wrote to the Phrygian Christians in Colossae, had already, in combating their theosophy, given utterance to profound thoughts as to the universal significance of Christ, which eclipses all mediate beings, and henceforth we see this Christian gnosis developing more and more fully. The author of the Epistle to the Ephesians reflects on the mystery of the co-ordination of all things which is manifested in Christ, but, characteristically, the main point which occupies him in this connexion is the historical opposition between Judaism and heathenism, the religion of the Covenant and estrangement from God. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seeks to prove that the most complete propitiation is contained in Christ's life and sufferings, but it is the Old Testament worship which he takes as his starting-point. The close connexion with Judaism by means of the Old Testament protects Christian speculation from being absorbed into Gnosticism proper or swept into this medley of religions. And if, occasionally, in the Johannine school, the Logos speculations of Greek philosophy are utilized as a point of connexion, it is

just in the gospel of John that the thoroughly practical spirit of primitive Christianity finds its strongest expression: that the 'Logos' (the 'Word') really became man and as such revealed the Father, and that, with the revelation of the truth, i.e. the moral nature of God, men were at the same time taught to do the truth, i.e. to follow the will of God, to love God and the brethren—these are the two poles around which this decisively anti-Gnostic gospel moves.

The age of primitive Christianity had long passed away, when, based on the efforts made by the apologists to reach a philosophical conception of Christianity in opposition to Gnosticism, there arose the theology of the Church, with its presupposition of a closed New Testament, the work of inspired apostles, and of a rule of faith authoritatively interpreting it under the guarantee of apostolic succession. It was not indeed till then that the communities of saints, with their inspired certitude of faith, their assurance of salvation, and their ready self-sacrifice in practice, were transmuted into the Church, that great organization provided with a system of guarantees,

which declares that salvation is to be gained only by accepting her teaching and making use of her sacraments, but yet cannot assure men of its final attainment. If one starts from the Gospel everything else will be subordinated to this decisive point of view. The features contrary to the Gospel which we have observed in primitive Christianity, ecstasy, disorder, crudity, unsoundness, are outweighed by this joyous and triumphant certainty of salvation obtained by grace. We have seen the manifestations of ecstasy suppressed, we have seen what was crude moulded into more and more definite form, and much that was harmful removed by education—as regards morality there was without doubt progress in the direction of order. The elaboration of a close hierarchical organization and the setting up of a fixed dogmatic teaching were proved to be the necessary means of self-preservation, if the Gospel itself was not to be lost in the vortex of Gnosticism. But the whole development could not be regarded as an advance except on condition that the new-born attachment to the Church was not detrimental to the simple piety of the Gospel.

In primitive Christianity we already have the seeds of the whole later development, and it is only by realizing this that the later development can be understood. In primitive Christianity, too, we have at the same time the standard by which we can criticise the subsequent development, and for that very reason we must constantly recur to it. This appeal to the primitive age has been made again and again in the history of the Christian Church, but never so effectually as at the time of the Reformation. Any such appeal, however, should not take the form of a mere outward imitation of primitive Christian organization or lack of organization, but should consist in the inward renewal of the early Christian spirit —in the unfettered working of the Gospel.

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